

## THE TORCH OF LIFE: AN ESSAY ON JULIUS CAESAR

THE style of *Julius Caesar* is extraordinarily simple and naïve. It lacks the metaphoric richness which so often gives power and complexity to Shakespeare's poetry, and seldom touches the deep solemnities we meet in *Timon*. Here is an example:

He had a fever when he was in Spain;  
And when the fit was on him I did mark  
How he did shake . . . (I. ii. 119)

Again,

If we do lose this battle, then is this  
The very last time we shall speak together . . . (v. i. 98)

That is usual, not exceptional, here. We miss the packed and blazing associative language of *Henry V*: the vital image wrenched from its habitual usage to do exact metaphoric service in bringing the abstract and spiritual essence in moving splendour before our eyes, metaphors turned out

In the quick forge and working-house of thought.  
(*Henry V*, v, Cho. 23)

But deep notes are yet within the compass of this simplicity:

You are my true and honourable wife;  
As dear to me as are the ruddy drops  
That visit my sad heart. (II. i. 288)

And,

O that a man might know  
The end of this day's business ere it come!  
But it sufficeth that the day will end,  
And then the end is known. (v. i. 123)

Yet, though simple in point of metaphor, the play is far

from simple in other kinds of imaginative colour. The imagery of idea, simile, description, and incident presents a complex pattern of interthreading, dividing, and blending colours. The whole imaginative vision is extremely rich, ablaze with a vitality not found in previous plays. I will notice first two main elements: animal-suggestion and metals.

We have a fine menagerie of beasts. They are mostly picturesque and, if not, often presented with a vivid and visual sense-perception that all but makes them so. There are many dog references, such as 'letting slip the dogs of war' (III. i. 273) 'base spaniel fawning' (III. i. 43), the dog 'baying the moon' (IV. iii. 27), Casca 'like a cur' stabbing Caesar from behind (V. i. 43), Caesar spurning a suitor 'like a cur' (III. i. 46). Besides these the horse is often mentioned and compared in point of fiery vitality and spirit with human beings by both Brutus and Antony (IV. ii. 23-7; IV. i. 29-36). Horses, so often idealized in Shakespeare, contribute powerfully, as in *Macbeth*, to the ominous disorder-symbols (II. ii. 23). Caesar and danger are like 'two lions litter'd in one day' (II. ii. 46). We hear of a lion that 'glared' and 'went surly by' (I. iii. 20-21); 'a lioness', says Calpurnia, 'hath whelped in the streets' (II. ii. 17). Cassius compares Caesar to a 'lion' (I. iii. 106). Two eagles perch on Cassius' ensign and fly away, giving place to ravens, crows, and kites (V. i. 81-7). The bird of night sits 'hooting and shrieking in the market-place' (I. iii. 26-8). Says Antony over Caesar's body:

How like a deer, stricken by many princes,  
Dost thou here lie! (III. i. 209)

He is a 'hart' (III. i. 207). The conspirators showed their teeth 'like apes' and fawned 'like hounds' (V. i. 41). There is elsewhere direct reference to the lamb, ass, unicorn, bear, elephant, hind, wolf, sheep, lamb, adder, Hybla bees; and, moreover, suggestion of others: 'ferret and fiery eyes' (I. ii. 186), 'waspish' temper (IV. iii. 50) and the falcon (I. i. 77-8). Now this list is dominated by a single quality:

vivid and picturesque perception. Often the comparison with men is important. Throughout we shall observe a peculiar sensitiveness to human appearance and human 'spirit': a vivid apprehension of human life. This apprehension extends to the animals, often, as in some of the above examples, both animal and man deriving a heightened and startling visual reality by a skilful comparison. The play, as a whole, works within the limits of our animal-list: it is startling, picturesque, vivid.

The flash of metals illumines the action. Sometimes they are heavy, dull: the conspirators' swords have 'leaden points' to Antony (III. i. 173), sleep lays his 'leaden mace' on Lucius (IV. iii. 268). More often they are vivid, spiritualized things. Swift anger is carried 'as a flint bears fire' (IV. iii. 111). Thus fiery spirit is associated with a 'flint' and 'fire'. The spirit-metal association occurs again in:

Nor stony tower, nor walls of beaten brass,  
Nor airless dungeon, nor strong links of iron,  
Can be retentive to the strength of spirit. (I. iii. 93)

Thus spirit is stronger, keener, than the metal it employs—  
'I know where I will wear this dagger then' (I. iii. 89).  
Terrible news is like steel: Cassius' death to Brutus will be  
as 'piercing steel and darts envenomed' (V. iii. 76). A  
lover's heart is gold:

There is my dagger,  
And here my naked breast; within, a heart  
Dearer than Plutus' mine, richer than gold:  
If that thou be'st a Roman, take it forth;  
I, that denied thee gold, will give my heart.  
(IV. iii. 100)

As so often in Shakespeare, heart's-gold is compared with gold metal. Again, we have a dagger here. Daggers, metals, gold, are scattered throughout. Spirited action uses swords or daggers for its purpose. There are the daggers that murder Caesar, and Brutus has the same dagger for himself when his country needs his death (III. ii. 52). They are vivid, alive things. 'Here, as I point my sword, the sun arises' (II. i. 106). 'Here, take thou the hilts', says

Cassius to Pindarus at the moment of his death (v. iii. 43), and

Caesar, thou art reveng'd,  
Even with the sword that kill'd thee. (v. iii. 45)

'I held the sword' says Strato of Brutus' death, 'and he did run on it' (v. v. 65). These are a few instances: but swords and daggers are important throughout, dramatically and imaginatively. The use of them is vivid, spirited. And there are other rich metals, 'coronets' (i. ii. 239), 'a kingly crown' (iii. ii. 101). Brutus talks of coining 'his heart' and selling his 'blood for drachmas' (iv. iii. 72-3). Again a heart-gold association, as in *Timon*. I return to it later. We hear of an ass bearing gold (iv. i. 21). Brutus' countenance will be as 'richest alchemy' to glorify the murder of Caesar (i. iii. 159). This assortment of metallic suggestion points us to two ideas: (1) spirited action—'daggers', and (2) the gold of man's heart. Throughout we shall observe a certain positive life-force firing the play's action. The keen metal of spirited purpose and the deep gold of love—vivid in the 'drachmas' left to Roman citizens in Caesar's will—blend, contrast, and support each other in this world of spirit, fire, and love.

Those words I intend to justify. The vision throughout is both 'sensuous' and 'spiritual'. 'Sensuous' I use to indicate a vivid apprehension of physical detail, especially in man's facial appearance; 'spiritual' to suggest a dynamic energy in man, a fiery blood and fire vitality which enriches the action from start to finish. Although many elements of gloom, death, sickness, and sleeplessness occur, yet our whole vision is rather a life-vision and a love-vision than one of negation: there is no cloud of cynicism over the action.

There is continual reference to very ordinary things which would not normally be expected to take part in high tragedy. These are natural enough in a Roman play: Caesar's parks and walks, city walls, battlements, towers, windows, chimney-tops, chariots, statues, pulpits, porches, robes, parchment. But it is more surprising to find napkins, tapers, wax, clocks, kerchiefs, hats, Caesar's 'closet', his

nightgown, Brutus' 'closet', Caesar's gown—very vividly described—Brutus' gown, the leaf of Brutus' book turned down where he left off reading (iv. iii. 273), 'nightcaps' (i. ii. 248), Brutus' 'wholesome bed' (ii. i. 264). Yet such are integral to the poetic statement here. In this play of fine action, where world-issues so tremendous are being decided, we yet face a vision which notices these details. There is a warm, sympathetic, and emotional apprehension of such things, articles themselves warm with the touch of human personality. So sympathetic a human realism thus interpenetrates our theme. Which sympathy is still more rich in human detail. References to personal appearance are everywhere. The countenance, in joy or grief or excitement, is frequently observed. Brutus has 'veil'd his look' to Cassius and turns 'the trouble of his countenance' only upon himself (i. ii. 37-9); he will construe to Portia 'all the charactery' of his 'sad brows' (ii. i. 308). The conspirators come to Brutus with 'half their faces buried in their cloaks' (ii. i. 74). Upon which Brutus soliloquizes:

O conspiracy,  
Sham'st thou to show thy dangerous brow by night,  
When evils are most free? (ii. i. 77)

Therefore they must hide treachery's 'monstrous visage' in 'smiles and affability' (ii. i. 81-2). He tells them to 'look fresh and merrily' (ii. i. 224). Fear is vividly described: 'a hundred ghastly women transformed with their fear' (i. iii. 23). So, too, Cassius tells Casca:

You look pale, and gaze,  
And put on fear, and cast yourself in wonder.  
(i. iii. 59)

Dangers will vanish when they see Caesar's 'face' (ii. ii. 12). Here is a vivid, visual touch:

Cassius, be constant;  
Popilius Lena speaks not of our purposes,  
For, look, he smiles, and Caesar doth not change.  
(iii. i. 22)

Romans came 'smiling' in Calpurnia's dream to bathe

their hands in Caesar's blood (II. ii. 79); mothers, says Antony, will but 'smile' to see their children slaughtered (III. i. 267). Before the murder the conspirators showed their teeth 'like apes' (v. i. 41). Again,

If we do meet again, why, we shall smile. (v. i. 118)

Brutus tells Strato to 'turn away' his 'face' as Brutus runs on his sword (v. v. 47). Cassius tells Pindarus to strike 'when my face is covered, as 'tis now' (v. iii. 44); so, too, Caesar fell 'in his mantle muffling up his face' (III. ii. 191). Cassius has 'a lean and hungry look' (I. ii. 194):

Seldom he smiles, and smiles in such a sort  
As if he mock'd himself and scorn'd his spirit  
That could be moved to smile at any thing. (I. ii. 205)

Here is a striking piece of such pictorial writing:

But, look you, Cassius,  
The angry spot doth glow on Caesar's brow,  
And all the rest look like a chidden train:  
Calpurnia's cheek is pale; and Cicero  
Looks with such ferret and such fiery eyes  
As we have seen him in the Capitol,  
Being cross'd in conference by some senators.  
(I. ii. 182)

'Eyes' are, indeed, especially frequent. There is Brutus' and Cassius' conversation on 'eyes' (I. ii. 51-8). 'Why stare you so?' asks Cicero of Casca (I. iii. 2). 'Set honour in one eye, and death i' the other' and Brutus will regard them indifferently (I. ii. 86). Caesar's 'eye' lost 'its lustre' during his fever (I. ii. 124); the lion in the Capitol 'glared' on Casca (I. iii. 21); Brutus asks Lucius if he can hold up 'his heavy eyes awhile' to play music (IV. iii. 256). 'Eyes' are vivid:

Shall I be frighted when a madman stares? (IV. iii. 40)

Brutus would not wrangle before the 'eyes' of the army (IV. ii. 43). Seeing the ghost, he cries:

I think it is the weakness of mine eyes  
That shapes this monstrous apparition. (IV. iii. 276)

Nor are 'eyes' the only physical details so vividly observed. Parts of the body are frequently mentioned. Cassius recognizes Casca by his 'voice':—'your ear is good', says Casca (I. iii. 41-2). Later, he knows Cinna by 'his gait' (I. iii. 132). The conspirators' hats are 'plucked about their ears' (II. i. 73). Says Caesar:

Come on my right hand, for this ear is deaf. (I. ii. 213)

There is mention of Ligarius' ear (II. i. 319). Casca stabs Caesar 'on the neck' (v. i. 44): he is the first to 'rear' his 'hand' (III. i. 30). The citizens, if they realized his love, would 'beg a hair of him for memory' (III. ii. 139). The conspirators kissed 'Caesar's feet' before stabbing him (v. i. 42). Cassius' faults are cast into his 'teeth' (iv. iii. 99). 'I kiss thy hand' says Brutus (III. i. 52); and Cassius: 'As low as to thy foot doth Cassius fall' (III. i. 56). We hear of the Senators as 'greybeards' (II. ii. 67), of Cicero's 'silver hairs' (II. i. 144), Caesar's wounds are 'dumb mouths' with 'ruby lips' (III. i. 260), and when Caesar was ill 'his lips did from their colour fly', his 'tongue' cried for drink (I. ii. 122). 'Tongue' is frequent (II. i. 313; II. iv. 7; III. i. 261; III. ii. 232; v. i. 46; v. v. 39). Caesar was loath to lay his 'fingers' off the crown (I. ii. 243), the citizens 'clapped their chopped hands' and uttered such 'stinking breath' that Caesar fell down, and Casca dared not laugh for fear of opening his 'lips' and receiving the 'bad air' (I. ii. 245-53). Caesar 'plucked me ope his doublet and offered them his throat to cut' (I. ii. 267). Cassius cries:

There is my dagger,  
And here my naked breast. (iv. iii. 100)

Brutus talks of 'this breast of mine' (I. iii. 49), and Cassius bares his 'bosom' to the 'thunderstone' when the lightning opens 'the breast of heaven' (I. iii. 49-51). It is time to close our list which is not exhaustive. But these are important touches. They witness a certain intimacy in the poet's treatment of his persons, an intimacy reflected in the reader, so that we experience a vivid awareness of these persons' bodies and appearances, a certain emotional



sympathy with them as physical beings. We regard them as one we love, whose 'eyes', 'hands', 'feet', are important, spiritualized, dynamic to our senses.

Besides actual body-references there are many thoughts of body-nourishment, the life-forces of eating, drinking, sleeping. The play opens at 'The Feast of Lupercal'. Caesar, in his fever, called 'Give me some drink, Titinius' (I. ii. 127), and Cassius gives as reason for his equality with Caesar that they both 'have fed as well' (I. ii. 98).

Upon what meat doth this our Caesar feed,  
That he is grown so great? (I. ii. 149)

Cassius asks Casca to a meal:

*Cassius.* Will you sup with me to-night, Casca?

*Casca.* No, I am promised forth.

*Cassius.* Will you dine with me to-morrow?

*Casca.* Ay, if I be alive, and your mind hold, and your dinner worth the eating. (I. i., 292)

Referring to this blunt wit of Casca's, Cassius says:

This rudeness is a sauce to his good wit,  
Which gives men stomach to digest his words  
With better appetite. (I. ii. 304)

Brutus' melancholy will not let him eat, talk, or sleep (II. i. 252). Portia is only wanted to keep with him 'at meals' and comfort his bed (II. i. 284). Caesar is to be carved as a 'dish fit for the gods' not 'as a carcass fit for hounds' (II. i. 173-4). The conspirators are invited to 'taste some wine' with Caesar before they go to the Capitol 'like friends' (II. ii. 126-7). Hence Brutus' act, like Macbeth's, is a desecration of hospitality, conviviality: an evil opposed to a life-force. Cinna the poet dreamed that he feasted with Caesar (III. iii. 1), Cassius is told to 'digest' the venom of his spleen (IV. iii. 47), Brutus and Cassius celebrate their new-cemented friendship with a bowl of wine (IV. iii. 158): an association again suggesting the usual Shakespearian connexion between the sacrament of feasting or drinking and love. Eagles perched on Cassius' standards 'gorging and feeding from our soldiers' hands' (V. i. 82). Now these 'feeding'



references are not peculiar to this vision: they recur with equal force in *Antony and Cleopatra* and *Macbeth*, where in the one they are triumphant life-forces, in the other desecrated by evil. Yet, since this play contains the beginnings of both those, these elements are to be observed. They suggest health, happiness, love—they are positive life-forces: either they accompany and blend with love (as the bowl of wine) or they are sharply contrasted with some evil, enemy to life, as in Brutus' mental unrest which will not let him 'eat', or the desecration of Caesar's hospitality. Here, too, they harmonize with the peculiar domestic and intimate note I have already observed. Portia complains how Brutus arose 'yesternight at supper' to muse and sigh distractedly. 'Ungently', he has stole from her bed (II. i. 237-8). And sleeping, sweet restorative to anguish, is recurrently suggested here: Brutus' anguish, like Macbeth's, is one bound with sleeplessness. At the centre of the play the impending evil wakes families, units of peaceful life, from their beds. So Portia and Brutus, Calpurnia and Caesar, the latter in his 'night-gown', rise unrestfully, disturbed by unruly thoughts or fears. This element I have noticed in detail elsewhere. Thus we have not only a powerful apprehension of the human body, but also recurrent suggestion of that which nourishes and refreshes the body. The disorder forces are seen to oppose these forces of life. There is also frequent suggestion of the opposites: disease, infirmity, weakness.

In this matter *Julius Caesar* is pre-eminent. Nearly every one in the play is ill. Calpurnia is 'barren'. Cassius bases his arguments against Caesar mainly on points of physique. He tells how he and Caesar tested their swimming powers in the Tiber, 'stemming it' with 'lusty sinews' (I. ii. 107-8); but Cassius eventually had to save the 'tired Caesar' from sinking. Then he vividly describes Caesar's 'fever' that made him 'shake', observing its effect on his 'lips', 'eye', 'tongue', and 'voice' (I. ii. 119-31). Why should a man of such 'feeble temper' sway the 'majestic' world? Caesar swoons, he has 'the falling sickness' (I. ii.

257). He is deaf, too (I. ii. 213). Calpurnia wants to tell the Senate that Caesar is 'sick' (II. ii. 65). At first he will not agree, but finally gives way—'Mark Antony shall say I am not well' (II. ii. 55). Cinna the poet suffers from nervous apprehension (III. iii. 2). Calpurnia cries out in her sleep (II. ii. 2) and is, like Portia, at the point of breakdown. 'O I grow faint' cries Portia (II. iv. 43). Hearing of Portia's death, 'Upon what sickness?' asks Cassius (IV. iii. 152). Brutus pretends to be physically ill to hide his mental anxiety:

Is Brutus sick, and is it physical  
To walk unbraced and suck up the humours  
Of the dank morning? What, is Brutus sick,  
And will he steal out of his wholesome bed  
To dare the vile contagion of the night,  
And tempt the rheumy and unpurged air  
To add unto his sickness? (II. i. 261)

Later, Portia tells how he 'went sickly forth' (II. iv. 14). Primarily it is his soul, his 'state of man' that is ill; but this, as with Macbeth, includes his body. Ligarius comes, broken by fever and ague:

By all the gods that Romans bow before  
I here discard my sickness! (II. i. 320)

To be weak or thin meets observation and often reproach. Cassius blames Caesar for his physique. So also Caesar blames Cassius:

Let me have men about me that are fat,  
Sleek-headed men and such as sleep o' nights.  
Yond Cassius has a lean and hungry look;  
He thinks too much. Such men are dangerous.  
(I. ii. 192)

Physical weakness is thus twined with the recurrent idea of sleeplessness. But Lucius is always sleepy, in Act II and Act IV. Lepidus is 'a slight unmeritable man' (IV. i. 12), and, 'Away, slight man' (IV. iii. 37) cries Brutus in anger to Cassius. Cassius is short-sighted—'my sight was ever thick' (V. iii. 21). Often, then, we observe these enemies

to physical fitness: 'Caesar was ne'er so much your enemy as that same ague which hath made you lean' (II. ii. 112). Which sickness in our persons is more than once related to the wider sickness, or supposed sickness, of the state (I. ii. 259-60; II. i. 327). All the chief persons but Antony are physically or mentally unwell. Antony alone gives any suggestion of robustness. But even he 'revels long o' nights' and so sleeps late (II. ii. 116). Yet all the persons convey an impression of fiery strength and ardour. The spirit is fiery, the body is weak: which contrast is vivid in Cassius' arguments against Caesar, whose power bears no proportion to his physique, in Caesar's words on Cassius, and Ligarius' access of spiritual strength conquering his physical weakness. Thus we have an important body-spirit contrast. The association of 'body' and 'spirit' occurs powerfully in Brutus' speech on swearing:

Swear priests and cowards and men cautelous,  
Old feeble carrion . . . (II. i. 129)

Such, he says, are to be contrasted with the 'spirit' of the conspirators. The body-spirit thought is fundamental, whether in association or contrast.<sup>1</sup> I return to it later. For the present, I emphasize only the recurrent suggestion of physical appearance, the 'feeding' references, the many illnesses. We have a vivid apprehension of physical life, viewed with a strange intimacy and emotional sympathy; which sympathy is usually noticeable between the persons themselves. Emotion, too, is an important strand:

<sup>1</sup> Throughout Shakespeare there is a strong suggestion of a body-soul dualism in association especially with destructive acts, such as murder, or with deception, whereby the outward appearance conflicts with the inner fact. Often the 'body' is imaged as a building for the indwelling 'life', 'soul', or 'spirit'; often, too, the 'body' may be compared with 'city-walls'. See *Romeo and Juliet*, III. ii. 73-85; III. iii. 106-8; *Cymbeline*, III. iv. 70; *King John*, III. iii. 20-1; *Macbeth*, II. iii. 72-4; III. iv. 105. But they are numerous everywhere. And, as usual in Shakespeare, the metaphoric image may be expanded into the plan of a whole play. There is never a rigid distinction between Shakespeare's matter and manner. (I have dealt further with this body-soul dualism in 'The Shakespearian Metaphysic', *The Wheel of Fire*.)

especially 'weeping'. These spirited Romans are not only physically weak: they are excessively given to tears.

'Weeping' is indeed a valuable part of our emotional texture. Flavius orders the citizens to

Weep your tears  
Into the channel, till the lowest stream  
Do kiss the most exalted shores of all. (I. i. 63)

Octavius' servant sees Caesar's body, and his eyes fill with tears:

Thy heart is big, get thee apart and weep.  
Passion, I see, is catching; for mine eyes,  
Seeing those beads of sorrow stand in thine  
Began to water. (III. i. 281)

Antony is proud of his tears:

Had I as many eyes as thou hast wounds,  
Weeping as fast as they stream forth thy blood,  
It would become me better than to close  
In terms of friendship with thine enemies. (III. i. 200)

Every one here is proud of such emotion. It is base to be hard of 'heart':

You blocks, you stones, you worse than senseless things!  
O you hard hearts, you cruel men of Rome . . .  
(I. i. 40)

Caesar was soft-hearted: 'When that the poor have cried, Caesar hath wept' (III. ii. 96). In his oration Brutus emphasizes his own emotion:

As Caesar loved me, I weep for him . . . There is tears  
for his love . . . (III. ii. 27-31)

So, too, Antony sheds tears during his oration, and has to stop his speech—'Poor soul, his eyes are red as fire with weeping' (III. ii. 120). He has to pause till his 'heart' come back to him from Caesar's coffin (III. ii. 111). 'If you have tears, prepare to shed them now' (III. ii. 173). Then the citizens weep too:

O, now you weep, and I perceive, you feel  
The dint of pity: these are gracious drops. (III. ii. 197)

Softness of 'heart' is always a virtue in this play of emotions, especially love. 'O I could weep', says Cassius, 'my spirit from mine eyes' (iv. iii. 99). Brutus owes 'more tears' to the dead Cassius than those present shall see him 'pay' (v. iii. 101). At the last Brutus ends his long pilgrimage of honour in tears:

Now is that noble vessel full of grief,  
That it runs over even at his eyes. (v. v. 13)

So rich is this play in emotion. It is suffused by a soft sympathy, an interflow of gentle love, sympathetic sorrow. It is well to observe how, in these 'weeping' passages, the emotion is associated with the words 'heart', 'spirit', 'fire', 'passion': all are important.

We thus regard a play vividly and pictorially alive in point of bodily visualization, physical sympathy, and 'feasting'—a theme ever, as in *Timon*, *Antony and Cleopatra*, and *Menenius* (in *Coriolanus*), to be associated with generous love, life, and warmth of heart. The whole is suffused with a soft emotionalism. We might note the two curious 'school' references at i. ii. 300 and v. iv. 26, the latter expressly sentimental. The emotional sympathy between person and person, just as the visual exactitude of their descriptions of each other and their attention to bodily facts and frailties generally, witness an especially erotic atmosphere—quite divorced from 'sex'—which, though not a readily observed surface-theme, is yet fundamental to our understanding. Life is here our theme. Life vivid, yet ailing, and yet again fiery and spirited, and yet again gentle, emotional. The vision is similar to the experience of love which looks through the physical and makes contact with the spirit. Thus we find many 'lovers' in the play. Even Brutus, who fights for 'honour' against love, shows love for Lucius, whom, as the tragic sequel of his choice tracks him down, he asks to play his instrument 'a strain or two'. 'Love' is everywhere important. Our vision has wider significances than those of physique: it sees through the body to the spirit. Our 'weeping' passages suggested the words

'heart', 'spirit', 'fire': to those I now pass, and to the theme of the body (Caesar's, and, in a wider sense, Rome's) broken, gashed, loosing streams of rich life-blood, fountains of life's elixir. 'Blood', too, is here lovingly, almost erotically described: 'blood', and the 'heart' whose life it feeds, thus blending with 'passion' and 'emotion'.

There is an almost brutal enjoyment evident in our imagery of slaughter, wounds, and blood: yet is it so flamed with imagination's joy that there is no sense of disgust. Consider the speech where Brutus advises against the more 'bloody' course of assassinating Antony—as though 'to cut the head off and then hack the limbs'. Caesar must be 'dismember'd', must 'bleed': yet Brutus would 'carve him as a dish' for the gods, not 'hew him as a carcass' for hounds. He concludes that Antony

can do no more than Caesar's arm  
When Caesar's head is off. (II. i. 162–83)

Notice the 'blood'-thought, and the bold imagery of 'head', 'arm', 'limbs', 'dismember', 'hack', 'carve', 'hew'. It is a remarkable speech. There is a vivid awareness of the act in its physical appearance, sight of the broken, cut, bleeding human frame. And yet much of it is almost unnecessary: Caesar is not going to be carved into pieces, but stabbed. But the centre act of the play is certainly a spilling of blood, very vividly apprehended. Calpurnia has a dream wherein she sees Caesar's statue

Which, like a fountain with an hundred spouts,  
Did run pure blood; and many lusty Romans  
Came smiling, and did bathe their hands in it.  
(II. ii. 77)

Decius interprets it:

Your statue spouting blood in many pipes,  
In which so many smiling Romans bathed,  
Signifies that from you great Rome shall suck  
Reviving blood, and that great men shall press  
For tinctures, stains, relics, and cognizance. (II. ii. 85)

Blood is here finely expressed as a life-force. So the

shedding of it is, as it were, the spilling out of life. 'Life' and 'blood' may almost be equated. Hence the importance attached to 'blood' here. So Caesar is murdered, and falls at the base of Pompey's statue 'which all the while ran blood' (III. ii. 193). Then Brutus fulfils the dream-prophecy:

Stoop, Romans, stoop,  
And let us bathe our hands in Caesar's blood  
Up to the elbows, and besmear our swords:  
Then walk we forth, even to the market-place,  
And, waving our red weapons o'er our heads,  
Let 's all cry, 'Peace, freedom, and liberty!'  
(III. i. 105)

Such is the 'lofty scene' (III. i. 112) of Caesar's death:

How many times shall Caesar bleed in sport,  
That now on Pompey's basis lies along,  
No worthier than the dust!  
(III. i. 114)

This imagery is lurid, startling, vivid—but not exactly gruesome, as in *Macbeth*. The most horrible effects are carried lightly. Antony greets the conspirators:

I know not, gentlemen, what you intend,  
Who else must be let blood, who else is rank:  
If I myself, there is no hour so fit  
As Caesar's death's hour, nor no instrument  
Of half that worth as those your swords, made rich  
With the most noble blood of all this world.  
I do beseech ye, if you bear me hard,  
Now, whilst your purpled hands do reek and smoke,  
Fulfil your pleasure.  
(III. i. 151)

'Rich', 'noble', 'purpled'. Brutus replies that though appearances show them 'bloody and cruel', yet Antony sees only their 'hands' and this 'bleeding business': but their 'hearts' are 'pitiful'. Then Antony asks that each render him his 'bloody' hand: but is moved to address Caesar's corpse:

Had I as many eyes as thou hast wounds,  
Weeping as fast as they stream forth thy blood,  
It would become me better than to close  
In terms of friendship with thine enemies. (III. i. 200)



—enemies 'sign'd in thy spoil and crimson'd in thy lethe' (III. i. 206). When the conspirators leave him alone with the dead Caesar, he again expresses his grief in violent blood-imagery:

O pardon me, thou bleeding piece of earth,  
That I am meek and gentle with these butchers;  
Thou art the ruins of the noblest man  
That ever lived in the tide of times.  
Woe to the hand that shed this costly blood!  
Over thy wounds now do I prophesy,—  
Which, like dumb mouths, do ope their ruby lips,  
To beg the voice and utterance of my tongue—  
A curse shall light upon the limbs of men . . . (III. i. 254)

Civil war will rage in Italy, mothers but smile to see their children 'quarter'd with the hands of war' (III. i. 268); Which image of 'child' desecration is a normal Shakespearean image of essential life destruction, disorder, evil. The impact of these speeches impresses on us one thing: the 'costliness' of Caesar's blood. It is, as it were, a life-stream of infinite value: hence the association of Caesar with Olympus (III. i. 74), the north star (III. i. 60), and music (I. ii. 16). It is thus recognized alike by Antony and the conspirators who bathe in it as in a stream of life, emblematic of fortune. Notice, too, the 'dumb mouths' and 'ruby lips' of Caesar's wounds, the rich, almost joyous visualization of physical detail: even the maimed and bleeding body is pictured with almost erotic perception. The same exact attention recurs in Antony's description of Caesar's 'mantle' in his oration. The mantle itself is endued with a kind of personality, and each rent is noticed in turn.

Through this the well-beloved Brutus stabb'd;  
And, as he pluck'd his cursed steel away,  
Mark how the blood of Caesar follow'd it . . .  
(III. ii. 180)

Again,

I tell you that which you yourselves do know;  
Show you sweet Caesar's wounds, poor poor dumb mouths,  
And bid them speak for me . . . (III. ii. 228)

He would, if he had Brutus' eloquence, 'put a tongue in every wound of Caesar'. So strong the spirit of love works in our imagery here: it idealizes mantles, wounds, blood.

Kind souls, what, weep you when you but behold  
Our Caesar's vesture wounded? Look you here,  
Here is himself, marr'd, as you see, with traitors.  
(III. ii. 199)

If the commons heard Caesar's will,

they would go and kiss dead Caesar's wounds,  
And dip their napkins in his sacred blood,  
Yea, beg a hair of him for memory,

and bequeath it as 'a rich legacy' to their heirs (III. ii. 137). 'Sacred', 'rich', and the idea of 'kissing'. Something of exceeding richness and worth is desecrated in Caesar's assassination: a vital force, a stream of life, outflows at his death. And through all this imagery we notice a certain continuance of erotic perception, one with the details of bodily description and gentle emotionalism already observed. It is all visual, vivid. The actual stabbing of Caesar, the central act of the play, is vivid:

Witness the hole you made in Caesar's heart... (v. i. 31)

Cassius talks of the sword 'that ran through Caesar's bowels'—it is to 'search this bosom' (v. iii. 42). Brutus, finding Cassius dead, says it is Caesar's spirit which 'turns our swords in our own proper entrails' (v. iii. 95). Stabbing is ever an important theme. Portia gives herself 'a voluntary wound, here in my side' (II. i. 300). 'If Caesar had stabbed their mothers', says Casca of the Citizens, they would have cheered him no less readily (I. ii. 276).

Caesar impresses one here as a weak, ailing, small man: yet his life-blood drenches the play. Herein is a strong contrast. Often, indeed, we are pointed to a body-spirit contrast. 'In the spirit of men there is no blood' (II. i. 168)—but in the blood of men there is a spirit: hence the power of Caesar's 'blood' throughout the play. 'Blood' is close, very close, to 'spirit':

... every drop of blood  
 That every Roman bears, and nobly bears,  
 Is guilty of a several bastardy,  
 If he do break the smallest particle  
 Of any promise that hath passed from him. (II. i. 136)

'Rome, thou hast lost the breed of noble bloods' (I. ii. 151).  
 'Blood' may be closely equated with the spirit of honour, or love:

You are my true and honourable wife,  
 As dear to me as are the ruddy drops  
 That visit my sad heart. (II. i. 288)

Blood is 'vitality', the nearest physical thing to the spiritual. 'Young bloods look for a time of rest' (IV. iii. 262). 'Bloody' may often mean 'courageous' in Shakespeare. 'Blood' is thus associated with ideas of 'heart', and 'honour', and riches. 'Riches' in Shakespeare are often close to the heart's love: the association is stressed throughout *Timon*. The emotionalism of this play is twined with the word 'heart'. Brutus had rather 'coin' his 'heart' and 'drop' his 'blood for drachmas' than incur the shame of bribery (IV. iii. 72). So, too, Cassius' 'heart' is

Dearer than Plutus' mine, richer than gold.  
 (IV. iii. 102)

He who denied Brutus 'gold' will give his 'heart' (IV. iii. 104), and asks Brutus to 'take it forth' with his own dagger. 'Heart' is a frequent word. Portia cries to 'constancy' to set 'a huge mountain' between her 'heart and tongue' (II. iv. 7). 'Then burst his mighty heart'—Caesar's, at sight of Brutus' ingratitude (III. ii. 190). 'Heart' blends with the emotionalism, eroticism of our play. The conspirators' 'hearts' are pitiful (III. i. 169, 175). 'Brutus hath rived my heart', cries Cassius (IV. iii. 84); his 'heart' is 'thirsty' for Brutus' pledge of love (IV. iii. 160). 'Thy heart is big: get thee apart and weep', says Antony to Octavius' servant (III. i. 281); Portia's 'bosom' will 'partake the secrets' of Brutus' 'heart' (II. i. 305); Brutus 'sits high in all the people's hearts' (I. iii. 157); 'O my heart!' cries Titinius, on seeing

Cassius' body (v. iii. 58). See also 'bosom' at II. i. 305 and v. i. 7. 'Heart' is also something of fire and spirit: the conspirators are 'the most boldest and best hearts of Rome' (III. i. 121); the evil spirit vanishes when Brutus has 'taken heart' (iv. iii. 288); men may smile though they have 'mischief' in their 'hearts' (iv. i. 51). These suggestions are everywhere, thickly scattered.

So in *Julius Caesar* our blood-imagery does not horrify. It rather excites—it is a brilliant stream of rich life, sacrificially poured out in a drama of vivid life, erotic perception, dynamic and spiritualized humanity. All here is life, emotion, 'heart', spirit: albeit the house of life, the body, is frail, sickly, weak. The ailing flesh burns with an inner vital flame. That flame may be all but equated with blood. Antony talks both of the power of speech to 'stir men's blood' (III. ii. 227) and of being disposed to 'stir your hearts and minds to mutiny and rage' (III. ii. 126), which shows clearly the close 'blood'-'heart' relation: so, too, Brutus suggests that their 'hearts' should 'stir up' their limbs to an 'act of rage' and after 'chide them' (II. i. 176).

The contrast between 'body' and 'spirit', bridged by 'blood' and 'heart', is fundamental. Men are 'flesh and blood, and apprehensive' (III. i. 67). And they are strong in spirit. I have observed how the persons are mostly weak in body: they are all strong in 'spirit'. Ligarius is an exact instance:

I am not sick if Brutus have in hand  
Any exploit worthy the name of honour. (II. i. 316)

Again,

By all the gods that Romans bow before,  
I here discard my sickness! Soul of Rome!  
Brave son, derived from honourable loins!  
Thou, like an exorcist, hast conjured up  
My mortified spirit. Now bid me run,  
And I will strive with things impossible;  
Yea, get the better of them. (II. i. 320)

So he follows Brutus with a strong 'spirit', a 'heart' 'new-fired' (II. i. 332). Portia, too, points the same contrast:

O constancy be strong! upon my side,  
 Set a huge mountain 'tween my heart and tongue;  
 I have a man's mind, but a woman's might. (II. iv. 6)

The bodily weakness of Caesar is stressed by Cassius: on what meat does he feed to make him so great? But the strength of Caesar's 'blood' or 'spirit' dominates the drama:

We all stand up against the spirit of Caesar,  
 And in the spirit of men there is no blood.  
 O, that we then could come by Caesar's spirit,  
 And not dismember Caesar. But, alas,  
 Caesar must bleed for it . . . (II. i. 167)

They do not 'come by Caesar's spirit'. They slay his body, pour out his blood, but his 'spirit' wins. As an 'evil spirit' he visits Brutus in Act IV and at Philippi. Again,

O Julius Caesar, thou art mighty yet  
 Thy spirit walks abroad and turns our swords  
 In our own proper entrails. (v. iii. 94)

Caesar is revenged on Cassius with the sword that killed him. This is the spirit-strength of Caesar out of all proportion to his ailing, puny body. His 'spirit' strides, a Colossus, over the action. This contrast is stressed everywhere: hence the many illnesses, yet fiery strength, of all our persons. All reinforce the central theme: Caesar's personal weakness in body, even in mind; and his colossal 'spirit': the spirit of empire and order. 'Spirit' and 'fire' are thus recurrent words. Besides those passages just observed, I will now give some more instances, scattered over the play.

The conspirators, says Brutus, must undertake their action 'with untired spirits' (II. i. 227); Cassius lacks some part of Antony's 'quick spirit' (I. ii. 29). We are told that he smiles as though he scorned his 'spirit' (I. ii. 206), at the quarrel he could weep his 'spirit from his eyes' (IV. iii. 100), and at the end he is 'fresh of spirit' (V. i. 91). No metallic prison, says Cassius, 'can be retentive to the strength of spirit' (I. iii. 95); again, 'we are governed with our mothers' spirits', where spirit is contrasted with 'thaws and limbs' (I. iii. 81-3),

'Spirit' is often compared with, or replaced by, the words 'metal' or 'mettle'. This blends with metal-imagery, especially swords and daggers observed above. Casca was 'quick mettle' at school (I. ii. 300); horses, 'hot at hand' make 'gallant show and promise of their mettle' (IV. i. 24). 'Spirit' is often 'hot' or 'fiery'. Cassius refers to Brutus' 'honourable metal' (I. ii. 313), and Brutus to 'the insuppressive mettle of our spirits' (II. i. 134), 'See', says Flavius, 'whe'r their basest metal be not moved' (I. i. 66). To return to 'spirit': the name of Brutus will 'start a spirit' as soon as that of Caesar (I. ii. 147); but Lepidus is a 'barren-spirited' fellow (IV. i. 36), like Antony's horse, governed by Antony's 'spirit' (IV. i. 33). The 'melting spirits of women' need to be 'steelled with valour' (II. i. 122). The conspirators are 'the choice and master spirits of this age' (III. i. 163). Antony talks of 'ruffling up' the 'spirits' of the crowd (III. ii. 232). The idea is everywhere. All are obsessed with 'spirit'. And, as I have already noted, towering over the action is Caesar's 'spirit'. 'If then thy spirit look upon us now . . .', says Antony, after shaking hands with the conspirators (III. i. 195). And he prophesies that

Caesar's spirit, ranging for revenge,  
With Ate by his side come hot from hell,  
Shall in these confines with a monarch's voice,  
Cry 'Havoc!' and let slip the dogs of war. (III. i. 270)

Hot from hell. Spirit is a thing of 'fire'.

The action of the play is 'most bloody, fiery, and most terrible' (I. iii. 130). Ligarius follows Brutus with 'a heart new-fired' (II. i. 332), his mortified spirit revived. Brutus' arguments 'bear fire enough to kindle cowards' (II. i. 120). But sometimes the human will may pride itself in fighting against the fire of emotion. So Caesar tells Cimber that his prayers 'might fire the blood of ordinary men', but that Caesar does not bear 'such rebel blood that will be thawed from the true quality with that which melteth fools' (III. i. 40). The fire of passion may here 'melt' will-power. Hence the number of 'fire' or

'spirit' references and the constant suggestion of 'emotion' and 'weeping'. The play is full of the 'heart's' fire, the soft fire of emotion; which again is often the same as the fire of spirited action. 'Fire' is important as suggesting both action and emotion. Cassius is glad that his words have 'struck fire' from Brutus (I. ii. 177). Fire is spirit and so life itself. Casca is dull and lacks 'those sparks of life' which a Roman ought to possess (I. iii. 57). 'Fire' is also to be associated with 'pity' and 'weeping'. In Act I the Tribunes address the crowd:

O you hard hearts, you cruel men of Rome  
Knew you not Pompey? (I. i. 41)

The idea of 'hardness' is the reverse of passion's fire. The citizens' 'hearts' will not melt with pity: hence they are 'blocks', 'stones', 'worse than senseless things'. Antony repeats the idea with fire-imagery:

You are not wood, you are not stones, but men;  
And, being men, hearing the will of Caesar,  
It will inflame you . . . (III. ii. 147)

Antony's eyes are 'red as fire with weeping'—a fine 'fire'- 'weeping' association; so, too, Cicero's are ferret-like and 'fiery' from passion (I. ii. 186). Anger 'glows' on Caesar's cheek (I. ii. 183). Pity drives out pity as fire drives out fire (III. i. 171). Cassius' is a 'hot friend cooling' (IV. ii. 19). Brutus 'carries anger as the flint bears fire', he shows a 'hasty spark' and is cool again (IV. iii. 111). So we have a clear train of ideas: man's body, visually, almost erotically, observed; thoughts of physical weakness and sickness; emotion, blood, the heart's passion—the life-forces encased in the body; finally, spirit, fire, the fine essence of vitality, the human spirit in all its resplendent power and beauty, housed as it may be in a frail tenement of flesh. Which flesh-frailty serves the more clearly to silhouette the fiery quality of 'spirit'.

This vision of man as body and spirit entwined is part of a wider scheme in which we may view the body and



spirit of a state. The sickly anarchy in Brutus' soul is a reflection of that wider anarchy to be:

. . . the state of man,  
Like to a little kingdom, suffers then  
The nature of an insurrection. (II. i. 67)

The individual-state association occurs elsewhere. Ligarius asks Brutus what his enterprise may be:

*Brutus.* A piece of work that will make sick men whole.  
*Ligarius.* But are not some whole that we must make sick?  
*Brutus.* That must we also . . . (II. i. 327)

That is, Rome is sick of Caesar's tyranny. Cassius said as much before. Brutus remarks that Caesar 'hath the falling-sickness':

*Cassius.* No, Caesar hath it not; but you and I  
And honest Casca, we have the falling-sickness.  
(I. ii. 257)

Rome itself is 'sick': neither wholly because of Caesar's ambition, nor because of the conspirators' plot, but because of both. There is disorder, an irruption. The conspirators see Caesar as symbol of this disorder:

Now could I, Casca, name to thee a man  
Most like this dreadful night,  
That thunders, lightens, opens graves, and roars  
As doth the lion in the Capitol,  
A man no mightier than thyself or me  
In personal action, yet prodigious grown  
And fearful as these strange eruptions are. (I. iii. 72)

But Antony prophesies disorder as the result of Caesar's murder:

Over thy wounds now do I prophesy—  
Domestic fury and fierce civil strife  
Shall cumber all the parts of Italy . . . (III. i. 259)

Each side, as usual in Shakespeare, sees the other as the cause of disorder: thus, absolutely, the disorder is one of inharmonious relation only. But, just as Brutus sees his own soul as disordered, so we have sight of the wider disorder of Rome. And this disorder appears as a rough

unjointing of actuality, so that natural laws are suspended; and, beyond this, we see the spirit-world itself dissociated from any normal bodies of life, nakedly glaring its supernatural fires through Rome. We watch human 'bodies' and 'spirits' at work interlocking or severed from each other: but we also see not only the body of Rome but the spirit of Rome too severed from its body by the disorder of insurrection. The two modes, personal and political, are unified in the symbol of Caesar: he is both person and state, and so the pouring out of his life-blood is accompanied by the rending of that body which we call nature, and the disclosure of the fiery blood of a spirit-order which should normally be housed in the arterial veins of peaceful life:

O world, thou wast the forest to this hart,  
And this, indeed, O world, the heart of thee.

(III. i. 207)

Caesar is the 'heart' of the world. His death pours out the life-blood of communal life and order.

Caesar is the fiery symbol of Rome's spirit. He blazes in a fine majesty, supreme:

Those that with haste will make a mighty fire  
Begin it with weak straws: what trash is Rome,  
What rubbish and what offal, when it serves  
For the base matter to illuminate  
So vile a thing as Caesar!

(I. iii. 107)

So speaks Cassius. But yet again we must observe the thought of 'fire'. And the spirit-world exposed is 'fiery'. I have elsewhere observed the 'tempest' and the numerous instances of disorder—men, birds, beasts, all behaving unnaturally, impossibly. Here I would emphasize that such disorder symbols are ever related closely, in this play, to fire:

But never till to-night, never till now  
Did I go through a tempest dropping fire.  
Either there is a civil strife in heaven,  
Or else the world, too saucy with the gods,  
Incenses them to send destruction.

(I. iii. 9)

There is 'civil strife' in the spiritual world, as in Brutus' soul: or what appears to man as 'civil strife'. Anyway, man has sight of unnatural, fearful, spirit-things: things of fire, impossible and terrible:

A common slave—you know him well by sight—  
Held up his left hand, which did flame and burn,  
Like twenty torches join'd, and yet his hand,  
Not sensible of fire, remain'd unscorch'd. (I. iii. 15)

'Men all in fire walk up and down the streets' (I. iii. 25). Cassius does not fear these portents. He walks about at ease, baring his bosom to the thunderstone:

And when the cross blue lightning seem'd to open  
The breast of heaven, I did present myself  
Even in the aim and very flash of it. (I. iii. 50)

'All these fires, all these gliding ghosts' (I. iii. 63) are to him but the evil which the slaying of Caesar will cure: so, too, are they, from his view. Caesar is to Cassius a dire thing of disorder. He and Antony are both right: either, alone, are forces of order. Only Brutus, divided between both sides, is to be directly associated with these disorder symbols. That I have shown elsewhere. So Cassius presses on to action itself 'bloody, fiery, and most terrible' (I. iii. 130) with a clear conscience. The night is truly fearsome:

Fierce fiery warriors fought upon the clouds,  
In ranks and squadrons and right form of war,  
Which drizzled blood upon the Capitol;  
The noise of battle hurtled in the air,  
Horses did neigh, and dying men did groan,  
And ghosts did shriek and squeal about the streets.  
O Caesar! these things are beyond all use,  
And I do fear them. (II. ii. 19)

This spirit-blood blends the purely spiritual with life forms, just as man's 'blood' is the nearest material substance to life or spirit. Now this spirit-reality strikes fear: 'I do fear them', 'now they fright me' (II. ii. 14, 26). Again

You look pale and gaze,  
And put on fear and cast yourself in wonder. (I. iii. 59)

'It is the part of men', says Casca, 'to fear and tremble' when the gods send such portents (I. iii. 54). There is a heap of ghastly women 'transformed with their fear' (I. iii. 24). The divinity or spirituality of these appearances is stressed as well as their fearsomeness. There is 'civil strife in heaven' (I. iii. 11), 'nor heaven nor earth hath been at peace to-night' (II. ii. 1). Such spirit-forms are necessarily fear-inspiring to man. Here mankind has sight of abnormal, impossible events: ghosts walking from their graves, fires of all sorts in heaven and earth—pure spirit realities; again, in the natural world, distortion, abnormality—the slave with his burning hand, the lion in the Capitol, the night owl hooting all day, the beast without a 'heart' (II. ii. 40). 'Spirit' and 'matter' is, as it were, severed. That mating on which creation depends is suddenly cut apart, uncreated, chaos is come again. Neither spirit nor matter are now real, the fusion on which each depends is gone, each are derelict, meaningless, absurd. Matter uninfused with spirit is illogical: spirit naked is terrible. Hence man is afraid: afraid, as in *Macbeth*, of the alien and unknown; of spirit divorced from actuality, or actuality divorced from spirit. All this reflects the act opposed to creation and order: the slaying of Caesar, the shedding of his 'costly' spirit-blood. Though we must at times be prepared to adopt Cassius' view of Caesar as an evil, yet the balance of imaginative effects is stronger on the other side. In Shakespeare 'creation' is the result of two blending elements: the divine and earthly. These are 'mated'. Here they are roughly unmated. And in this chaos, past, present, future are all jumbled together: dead men are alive, prophets and dreams and forebodings foretell the future. As the Weird Sisters prophesy things past, present, and to come—Glamis, Cawdor, and King—so these spirit-events range beyond the present. They are the timeless background, or rather the fiery life-blood, usually infused into the veins of time: but here they are not so infused, they are seen in themselves, chaotic. The fire of creation itself is spilt out

across the skies of Rome as a Caesar's blood is spilt on the Capitol stones. Now fear is the note struck here and in *Macbeth* where the 'spirit' is viewed naked. But love is the response to the vision of spirit infusing matter. Here we see spirit both alone and embodied in human life: hence the play traverses psychic territories of fear and love.

I have called *Julius Caesar* erotic. The erotic perception indeed characterizes it throughout. And this erotic nature of it is also one with its vivid apprehension of 'spirit'. Here there is an optimistic vision of spirit as 'fire'. In *Macbeth*, so close to *Julius Caesar* in its vision of the soul's essence unmated to actuality, the spirit-world is dark, formless, void. Here we have no such profound sight. The abysses of reality are not sounded. Spirit is still 'fire', symbolic if you like, but yet 'fire', a thing of life, a positive and known force, like 'blood'. Much of the action, as in *Macbeth*, is in darkness: but that darkness is ever lit by fire: you can read by light of 'the exhalations whizzing in the air' (II. i. 44). There is not the Macbeth-murk, the Macbeth-negation. Here, on the ethical plane, Brutus' act is a purposive one, a thing of fine honour and spirit: spirit in turn is a thing of fire. Macbeth's act is purposeless, unutterably negative and dark. With this reservation, that the 'spirit' divorced from actuality is bright in one and dark in the other—we may yet remember the many glimmerings, as of Lady Macbeth's light, that illumine that murky hell—we can say that *Julius Caesar* and *Macbeth* present similar visions. But the fiery quality of *Julius Caesar* relates it also closely to *Antony and Cleopatra*. 'Fire' and 'love' are close, since love is the awareness and recognition of the spirit-flame in flesh. Love is powerful throughout *Julius Caesar*; but there is evil too. But in *Antony and Cleopatra* there is less actual 'fire', it is there ever housed in actuality, has no, or little, autonomy. Thus *Julius Caesar* forecasts both plays. In point of 'evil' it resembles *Macbeth*, in point of 'fire' and love *Antony and Cleopatra*: and these two themes must be related to Brutus and Cassius respectively.

The *Julius Caesar* world is fiery-bright with a brilliant erotic vision, which sees a flaming spirit in history, in action, in man. The poet is in love with his story and its actors, and the general effect is one of optimism. Often in Shakespeare love is accompanied by the universal lights of heaven. They are apparent here. 'Stars' and 'sun' occur in magnificent passages.

*Decius.* Here lies the east: doth not the day break here?

*Casca.* No.

*Cinna.* O pardon, Sir, it doth; and yon grey lines  
That fret the clouds are messengers of day.

*Casca.* You shall confess that you are both deceived.

Here, as I point my sword, the sun arises,  
Which is a great way growing on the south,  
Weighing the youthful season of the year.  
Some two months hence up higher toward the north  
He first presents his fire; and the high east  
Stands, as the Capitol, directly here. (II. i. 101)

Brutus 'cannot by the progress of the stars give guess how near to day' (II. i. 2). There are Calpurnia's fine lines:

When beggars die there are no comets seen,  
The heavens themselves blaze forth the death of princes.  
(II. ii. 30)

Caesar compares himself to a star, his starry greatness a thing of steady light unquenchable, unshaken:

But I am constant as the northern star,  
Of whose true-fix'd and resting quality  
There is no fellow in the firmament.  
The skies are painted with unnumber'd sparks,  
They are all fire and every one doth shine . . . (III. i. 60)

Caesar is thus infinite as eternity itself, like the 'Bright Star' of Keats's sonnet. The play is brilliant with light and fire.

This fire-imagery is resplendent everywhere. Cassius rescued Caesar from Tiber as Aeneas carried Anchises 'from the flames of Troy' (I. ii. 113). It may be used in connexion with household articles—the taper burning in Brutus' closet (II. i. 35), the taper burning in his tent (IV. iii. 164, 275); in connexion with war—a 'torch light'

(v. v. 2); with suicide—Portia swallowed ‘fire’ (iv. iii. 156). ‘Are those my tents where I perceive the fire?’ asks Cassius (v. iii. 13). The flaming passions of insurrection are a fire. The citizens, inflamed by Antony, cry ‘Burn! Fire! Kill! Slay!’ (III. ii. 208).

4th Cit. Come, away, away!  
We’ll burn his body in the holy place,  
And with the brands fire the traitors’ houses. . . .

2nd Cit. Go fetch fire. (III. ii. 258)

They will fetch ‘fire-brands’ (III. iii. 41). Thus a disorderly act unlooses the ‘fires’ of spirited revenge. When Brutus is dead his foes can but make a ‘fire’ of him (v. v. 55). The spirit-order, in man’s passionate ‘heart’ or behind the curtaining flux of time, is fire, like the ‘fierce fiery warriors’ above Rome’s Capitol. All here is fiery, spiritual ardour, in love, honour, insurrection, revenge, high intent of whatever kind. So the lights of heaven burn down, sun and stars, dawn, ‘exhalations’, comets; all take part in an action whose fiery spirit is worthy of their company. Darkness shot with light characterizes this play and *Macbeth*: but they change places—in *Macbeth* the ‘murk’, here ‘fire’ predominates. The whole universe of *Julius Caesar*—blood and fire blended in a fine act—is crystallized at Cassius’ death:

O setting sun!  
As in thy red rays thou dost sink to-night  
So in his red blood Cassius’ day is set;  
The sun of Rome is set. (v. iii. 60)

Caesar’s blood spilt on the marble of ‘Pompey’s statue’, Cassius’ on the Parthian plains. The red blaze of sunset accompanies this final act as dawn-fire preluded Caesar’s murder.

This play is a play of love and fire. The human element is emotional, erotic: that I analyse in my next essay. But this love-theme is one with the fire-theme. Love is sight of the material ablaze with spirit’s fire. Here we often see spirit naked, a naked flame and so, in a sense, unnatural, fearful, evil. But it is presented romantically. Even



disorder, evil, fear is lurid, bright, romantic. The whole play blazes with a fine vision of human excellence, a fiery vision of life itself, that which feeds or slays the body of man or the body of Rome: life as it appears outwardly, also its vital spirit. So we find Mr. Masefield's epithet to be justified. As he wrote it, Shakespeare saw life 'startlingly'. And this startling vision exposes the psychic fires which feed human life, it shows the volcanic forces behind the even tenour of existence. Roughly, the veil is torn from the face of reality, and the spirit exposed naked: something of vivid, startling, fiery strength.

But human life goes on. The fire of life is passed on from one torch to another. Love conquers the disintegration and disorder of the central acts. Friend still clasps the hand of friend, love does not die, the wounds of Rome are healed. No play of Shakespeare concentrates more on 'emotion', 'heart', 'love'. All the persons are 'lovers', with a soft eroticism not quite 'passion', but powerful, itself fiery. They all call each other 'noble'. These love-strands are most important: they cast our thoughts back to the vivid human visualization noted above, and forward to the themes of my next essay. We thus watch the gashing of Rome, and the closing, healing of its wounds. We watch the disjointed dereliction of 'spirit' and 'nature' untuned, dislocated: but also the re-mating, the re-creation, of love. Caesar himself was the lover of Rome. At the opening, Caesar enters in resplendent power, his majesty close-knit Rome in concord and love. It is the feast of Lupercal. And Caesar would have Antonius touch Calpurnia in his course, so that she may shake off her 'sterile curse' (1. ii. 9). That is a vivid life-suggestion.<sup>1</sup> His entry is heralded and accompanied by music:

I hear a tongue shriller than all the music,  
Cry 'Caesar!' Speak; Caesar is turn'd to hear. (1. ii. 16)

<sup>1</sup> This suggests Macbeth, who complains that

Upon my head they placed a fruitless crown  
And put a barren sceptre in my gripe . . . (*Macbeth*, III. i. 61)

See my remarks in the essay entitled "The Milk of Concord".

So, with fanfare of music, holy feasting, thoughts of birth, opens the erotic brilliance of this Caesarean theme. It is a vivid life-vision. This harmony Brutus shatters; in Rome, in his own heart. At the end he would solace his tired soul with the music of his boy, Lucius. But the ghost of Caesar intervenes. Not till Brutus' death is Rome crowned again with peace. Thus the action first shows us love, friendship, imperial sway. This surface is rudely gashed by the daggers of revolt, torn open, and the naked flames exposed which feed the mechanisms of social order, life, and love. The wound heals, Antony's love for Caesar avenges his death, peace is restored. And love and friendship bring the only final peace to the souls of both Brutus and Cassius.

### III

## THE EROTICISM OF JULIUS CAESAR

THE human element in *Julius Caesar* is charged highly with a general eroticism. All the people are 'lovers'. This love is emotional, fiery, but not exactly sexual, not physically passionate: even Portia and Brutus love with a gentle companionship rather than any passion. Though the stage be set for an action 'most bloody, fiery, and most terrible', though the action be fine, spirited, and adventurous, and noble blood be magnificently spilt in the third act, yet the human element is often one of gentle sentiment, melting hearts, tears, and the soft fire of love. There are many major and minor love-themes. There is love expressed or suggested between Brutus and Cassius, Brutus and Caesar, and Antony and Caesar; Brutus and Portia, Brutus and Volumnius, Brutus and Lucius; Caesar and Decius, Cassius and Lucius Pella, Cassius and Titinius; Ligarius and Brutus, Artemidorus and Caesar. Probably there are other instances. The word 'lover' is amazingly frequent, sometimes meaning little more than 'friend', but always helping to build a general atmosphere of comradeship and affection. Love is here the regal, the conquering reality: the murder of Caesar is a gash in the body of Rome, and this gash is healed by love, so that the play's action emphasizes first the dis-jointing of 'spirit' from 'matter' which is evil, fear, anarchy; and then the remating of these two elements into the close fusion which is love, order, peace.

I will note first the personal themes of Julius Caesar and Antony, and thereafter more closely observe the contrasted importance of Brutus and Cassius. The simplicity of *Julius Caesar* is a surface simplicity only. To close analysis it reveals subtleties and complexities which render interpretation difficult. Nor can I hope to avoid altogether obscurity and indecisiveness in the attempt to render the meaning of so involved a pattern. The play has, as it

were, four protagonists, each with a different view of the action.

The figure of Julius Caesar stands out, brilliant. From the start he is idealized in point of power, general respect, glory. His failings must not receive our only attention: he is endued dramatically with strength, importance, almost divinity. He is a sublime figure-head, but, the general acclamations at any time stilled, we see him as a man, weak, egotistical, petulant. But his weakness must not prevent our recognition of power behind such words as Cassius'

Why, man, he doth bestride the narrow world  
Like a Colossus . . . (I. ii. 135)

The Caesar-idea is accompanied by all the usual Shakespearian suggestions of world-glory and life-beauty. Here they are raised to a high pitch. The men of Rome put on their best 'attire' (I. i. 53) for his triumph, 'strew flowers in his way' (I. i. 55). His images are robed and decked with his 'trophies' and 'ceremonies' (I. i. 69-74). Every one's attention hangs on his words:

Peace, ho! Caesar speaks. (I. ii. 1)

His entry is accompanied with music. He is associated with images of infinity, the North Star and Olympus (III. i. 60, 74). He is, as it were, a frail man buoyed on the full flood of success. He is conscious of his own triumphant destiny:

. . . danger knows full well  
That Caesar is more dangerous than he:  
We are two lions litter'd in one day,  
And I the elder and more terrible. (II. ii. 44)

The idea of Caesar is ever far greater here than Caesar the man. It is so to Caesar himself. He has an almost superstitious respect for his own star, and is afraid of acting unworthily of it: thus he here persuades himself not to show fear, since he is greater than danger itself. Often he has to persuade himself in this fashion:

Shall Caesar send a lie?  
Have I in conquest stretch'd mine arm so far,  
To be afeard to tell greybeards the truth? (II. ii. 65)

This shortly follows his words, 'Mark Antony shall say I am not well' (II. ii. 55): either because now Decius is present, or purely due to his sudden attempt to live up to the Caesar-idea. He often vacillates like this. He tells Antony that Cassius is a danger, then pulls himself up sharply with, 'Always, I am Caesar' (I. ii. 212). We are, indeed, aware of two Caesars: the ailing and petulant old man, and the giant spirit standing colossal over the Roman Empire to be. There is an insubstantial, mirage-like uncertainty about this Caesar. How are we to see him? He is two incompatibles, shifting, interchanging. As the hour of his death draws near, this induces almost a sickening feeling, like a ship's rocking. This is the uncertainty, the unreal phantasma, of Brutus' mind, and, for a while, of ours. Caesar is himself, curiously, aware of both his selves: hence his rapid changes, his admixture of fine phrases resonant of imperial glory with trivialities, platitudes, absurdities. Confronted by Metellus Cimber's petition, he is intent, not on justice, but on preserving his own constancy. The North Star alone remains constant in the skies, and Caesar must be such a star to men:

So in the world; 'tis furnish'd well with men,  
And men are flesh and blood, and apprehensive;  
Yet in the number I do know but one  
That unassailable holds on his rank,  
Unshaked of motion: and that I am he,  
Let me a little show it, even in this,  
That I was constant Cimber should be banish'd,  
And constant do remain to keep him so. (III. i. 66)

He wants primarily to 'show' his constancy: to the world, to himself. He must prove its existence. His egotism thus knows no bounds. And yet his egotism is both compelling and ludicrous. The baffling coexistence of these elements in single speeches, single phrases even, is remarkable: there is nothing quite like it in Shakespeare. He can say with finality, 'Caesar doth not wrong' (III. i. 47). Petitions may 'fire the blood of ordinary men' but not Caesar's (III. i. 37). All this may seem a little foolish:

yet if we see only foolishness, we are wrong. We must observe both Caesars, keep both ever in mind: one physical and weak, the other all but supernatural in spiritual power, a power blazing in the fine hyperboles of his egocentricity. Cassius notes how superstitions now affect Caesar:

For he is superstitious grown of late,  
Quite from the main opinion he held once  
Of fantasy, of dreams, and ceremonies. (II. i. 195)

This is not surprising: it is a normal correlative to his superstitious respect for his idealized self. Nor, in this world, is superstition a fault: it is fully justified. Moreover Cassius himself (v. i. 77-9) and Calpurnia (II. ii. 13-14) express elsewhere an exactly similar change towards superstition. The Soothsayer's prophecy comes true. Dreams and auguries are justified by the event; portents are ever faithful harbingers of destruction. Caesar's ghost appears twice to Brutus, and he knows his hour has come (v. v. 17-20). We are vividly conscious of the supernatural. Thus Caesar's superstition and almost superstitious respect for his own importance are, in this universe, not irrational. Again, we are pointed to the root ideas here: physical weakness, spiritual energy, the supernatural. And this spiritual element burns fierce in the almost divine glory to which Caesar tries pathetically to adjust himself. Whatever it be, this Caesar-idea, it is more powerful than Caesar the man. It controls him while he lives, survives and avenges him after his death. 'The spirit of Caesar' is not reached by slaying Caesar's body: it rather gains strength thereafter. Therefore, whatever we may think of Caesar as a man, we must see him also as a symbol of something of vast import, resplendent majesty, and starry purpose.

Antony recognizes this fully. He loves Caesar. That is, he sees him as man and as hero and does not, like Brutus, distinguish between the two. Cassius despises him as a man, and therefore will not believe in him at all as a hero; Brutus loves him as a man but believes in him

only too powerfully as a hero, and thinks him therefore dangerous. To Antony the two aspects are indistinguishable. This is equivalent to saying that Antony ardently, almost passionately, loves Caesar: for in such love—and only then—the spiritual and personal elements are blended. That is ever the function of love: in creation or recognition, it mates the spiritual with the material. Antony, the lover, can thus unify our difficulties: in his words—and in his only, not in Caesar's—do we feel the dualism of Caesar's 'spirit' and physical being perfectly unified. In his words only we see the Caesar of history:

O mighty Caesar! dost thou lie so low?  
Are all thy conquests, glories, triumphs, spoils,  
Shrunk to this little measure? (III. i. 148)

We are suddenly at home here strangely: this is how we want to see Caesar, how we expect to see him, how we are never allowed to see him till he is dead. The conspirators' swords are 'rich with the most noble blood of all this world' (III. i. 155). Again,

Thou art the ruins of the noblest man  
That ever lived in the tide of times.  
Woe to the hand that shed this costly blood! (III. i. 256)

He sees him as a man he loved; also as a supremely noble man; and, still further, as a symbol of government and peace. Now that he is rashly slain, forces of disorder will rage unchecked:

Domestic fury and fierce civil strife  
Shall cumber all the parts of Italy. (III. i. 263)

Caesar's 'spirit' will have its revenge. In his oration he again stresses both Caesar's lovable personality and his importance as victor and national hero. His personal and national goodness are here entwined: to Antony Caesar is Rome's lover. Caesar hath 'wept' (III. ii. 96) for the poor of Rome, his captives' ransoms filled Rome's 'general coffers' (III. ii. 94). He is thus a national friend or lover over and beyond his love for Antony:

He was my friend, faithful and just to me: (III. ii. 90)



or his love for Brutus:

For Brutus, as you know, was Caesar's angel:

Judge, O you gods, how dearly Caesar loved him.

(III. ii. 185)

So the people of Rome should 'mourn for him' (III. ii. 108) as for a dear friend. Caesar is now shown as a general lover. The common people, if they heard his will, would

go and kiss dead Caesar's wounds,  
And dip their napkins in his sacred blood,  
Yea, beg a hair of him for memory,  
And, dying, mention it within their wills,  
Bequeathing it as a rich legacy  
Unto their issue.

(III. ii. 137)

Notice the strongly erotic emotion here. Throughout Antony's speech, love—whether of Caesar for Brutus, Antony or Rome, or of Antony or Rome for Caesar—is stressed in contrast to the ever more sarcastically pronounced suggestion of 'honour': 'honourable men whose daggers have stabbed Caesar' (III. ii. 156). 'Love' is pitted against 'honour'. Even Caesar's mantle is suffused with emotion, almost sentimentality:

If you have tears, prepare to shed them now.

You all do know this mantle: I remember

The first time ever Caesar put it on;

'Twas on a summer's evening, in his tent,

That day he overcame the Nervii.

(III. ii. 173)

So personal can be Antony's appeal. At the other extreme he sees Caesar's murder as a treason which plunges Rome in disaster. When 'great Caesar fell', Rome fell too:

O! what a fall was there, my countrymen;

Then I, and you, and all of us fell down,

Whilst bloody treason flourish'd over us.

(III. ii. 194)

Then Antony shows them Caesar's body itself:

Kind souls, what! weep you when you but behold

Our Caesar's vesture wounded? Look you here,

Here is himself, marr'd, as you see, with traitors.

(III. ii. 199)

Antony emphasizes the personal element throughout. But he is also aware of the political aspect. The idea of Caesar as an abstract principle of order is not, in his mind, divided from Caesar his friend, the lover of Rome, now a stricken lifeless body. He thinks of the wounds, the torn mantle that was Caesar's. Elsewhere he refers to Caesar's 'spirit': here, and usually, he sees Caesar as a lovable, noble, and great man whose murder is a senseless and wicked act. So close are the personal and public elements twined in his thoughts that he readily suggests that personal reasons must have urged the conspirators to their deed:

What private griefs they have, alas, I know not,  
That made them do it . . . (III. ii. 217)

Although Antony is, of course, ready to stress all that may suit his purpose, yet his attitude throughout his oration is exactly in line with his other thoughts and acts. He only has to be sincere to win over the citizens to his side:

I am no orator, as Brutus is;  
But, as you know me all, a plain blunt man,  
That love my friend. (III. ii. 221)

It is true: he does not need to act. He reads the will, Caesar's bequests to the Roman people. The citizens recognize Caesar now as 'royal'. He is 'most noble Caesar', and 'royal Caesar' (III. ii. 248, 249). The final effect is clinched in Antony's

Here was a Caesar! When comes such another? (III. ii. 257)

Through making a division between Caesar the man and Caesar the national hero and dictator, Brutus, Cassius, and indeed Caesar himself, have all plunged Rome and themselves in disaster. We thus find ever at the heart of this play the thought of 'spirit' dissociated from 'body'. 'We all stand up against the spirit of Caesar' (II. i. 167). This disjointing is at the root of the fiery portents, naked spirit unbodied in temporal and physical forms; the queer acts of beasts and men, bodies derelict of controlling, infusing 'spirit'. It is this division of thought that makes both Brutus and Cassius see Caesar as dangerous, though

Cassius himself suffers no inward division, since he does not see Caesar as powerfully evil, but rather as trivial, and blames not Caesar but Rome for the worship it accords him. He distinguishes only between Caesar the man—whom he sees singly—and the absurd idolatry of Rome. Thus, as I shall show, the disjointing of elements in man or state is to be related rather to Brutus than Cassius. Caesar, too, makes implicit distinction between himself as man and ruler. Now the central act, Caesar's assassination, is shown as a rough breaking of 'spirit' from 'body', whether of Caesar or Rome. Antony's love alone heals the dualism. Throughout he avoids this distinction. He unifies the dualism created by the poet in presenting Caesar as almost a dualized personality. It is the way of love. It unifies both the mind or soul of the subject, and the thing, person, or world that is loved, blending 'spirit' in 'body', seeing the physical afire with spirit-essence. So Antony alone knows the one Caesar better than Brutus and Cassius, better than Caesar himself, better than we who faithfully react to the impressions of the early scenes. Because he loves and is moved by love he sees things simplified, unified. His acts tend likewise to heal the gaping dualism of 'spirit' and 'matter' that has resulted from the gashing of Rome's civic body. Portents have blazed their terrors over Rome, the spirit of Rome being torn from its body; and supernatural portents, omens, ghosts continue after Caesar's death. Fierce civil chaos is threatened now, as Antony prophesies: the body of Rome disorganized, disjointed by lack of any controlling spirit. Antony speaks, acts, fights to heal Rome. The wounds of Rome, the separation of 'spirit' from 'body', are thus healed by a lover and his love. Caesar's 'spirit' is then at peace.

Caesar we must therefore be ready to regard as Antony sees him; and yet, as I have elsewhere shown, we are forced by the play's symbolic effects to see the action largely through the eyes of Brutus. That we may do this Caesar is also shown to us as he appears to Brutus: he is both man

and demi-god curiously interwoven. But it will be clear that Brutus' failure to unify his knowledge of Caesar is a failure properly to love him, love being the unifying principle in all things, regularly opposed in Shakespeare to disorder, treachery, evils of all kinds: this is the continual 'music'-'tempest' contrast throughout the plays. Now Brutus' failure to love his friend, Caesar, is one with his worship of abstract 'honour'. Therein we have the key to his acts: he serves 'honour' always in preference to love. Both his 'love' for Caesar and his 'honour' are given exact expression. Cassius asks Brutus if he would not have Caesar made king:

I would not, Cassius; yet I love him well.  
 But wherefore do you hold me here so long?  
 What is it that you would impart to me?  
 If it be aught toward the general good,  
 Set honour in one eye and death i' the other,  
 And I will look on both indifferently:  
 For let the gods so speed me as I love  
 The name of honour more than I fear death. (I. ii. 82)

This love Brutus sacrifices to his 'honour'.

The rest of the play illustrates his attitude. Honour first, love second. His anxieties have made him forget 'the shows of love to other men' being 'himself at war' (I. ii. 46-7). Portia is distressed at his lack of kindness. He has risen 'ungently' from their bed; last night he 'suddenly arose' at supper, and paced the room 'musing and sighing'. Questioned, he stared at her 'with ungentle looks', stamped 'impatiently', and dismissed her 'with an angry wafture' of his hand (II. i. 237-51). So she pits the strength of love against his schemes of honour:

. . . and, upon my knees,  
 I charm you, by my once-commended beauty,  
 By all your vows of love and that great vow  
 Which did incorporate and make us one,  
 That you unfold to me, yourself, your half,  
 Why are you heavy, and what men to-night  
 Have had resort to you . . . (II. i. 270)

She wins her fight—for the moment—and draws from him the deep emotion of:

You are my true and honourable wife,  
As dear to me as are the ruddy drops  
That visit my sad heart. (II. i. 288)

And she herself knows the meaning of honour and courage. She has given herself a 'voluntary wound' to prove her constancy. Brutus, hearing this, prays the gods to make him worthy of 'this noble wife' (II. i. 302). The Brutus-Portia relation is exquisitely drawn. It reminds us of Hotspur and Lady Percy. But Hotspur was stronger, more single in purpose, and, in a sense, more wary than Brutus: he gave away no secrets, whereas Brutus' surrender to Portia came near ruining the conspiracy. It is to be noted that 'honour' is so strong in Brutus that Portia knows she must play up to it, show herself courageous, possessing a sense of 'honour' like his. Brutus' obsession, almost to absurdity, with this thought is further evident from his long speech, prolixly expanding the idea that an oath is unnecessary to bind Romans to a noble enterprise:

... what other bond  
Than secret Romans, that have spoke the word,  
And will not palter? and what other oath  
Than honesty to honesty engaged,  
That this shall be, or we will fall for it? (II. i. 124)

Again, he nearly ruins his own cause: we may relate to this 'oath' speech the fact that some one has given away details of the conspiracy to Popilius Lena and Artemidorus. Brutus is ever out of touch with practical affairs, which is natural in a man so devoted to an ethical abstraction. He unwisely refuses to let Antony be slain; perhaps also unwisely objects to the inclusion of Cicero among the conspirators. He is, in fact, a disintegrating force in the conspiracy, just as he is a disintegrating force to Rome: without him, the conspiracy might well have been successful, and we should then give final sanction to

Cassius' rather than Antony's view of Caesar. Here we see the profound poetic necessity of Caesar's apparent weakness: it justifies Cassius' whole-hearted hostility. Cassius and Antony are both order-forces, love-forces in the play: Cassius' hate of Caesar is one with his love of his excellently arranged conspiracy, and his love of the conspiracy is a practical, efficient thing, as efficient as Antony's love of Caesar. Brutus loves primarily nothing but 'honour', but many things with secondary affection: Cassius, Portia, Caesar, the conspiracy. Brutus is thus divided in mind, in outlook. He is 'with himself at war' (I. ii. 46); in him

the state of man,  
Like to a little kingdom, suffers then  
The nature of an insurrection. (II. i. 67)

All the disorder-symbols in the play, all our ideas of disorder and disruption in reading it, our two-fold and indecisive vision of two Caesars—demi-god and dolt—are to be related closely to Brutus, rather than to Cassius or Antony. They enjoy a oneness of vision, a singularity of purpose: Brutus does not.

Brutus throughout continues his honourable course. He is aptly praised by Ligarius:

Soul of Rome!  
Brave son, derived from honourable loins! (II. i. 321)

All the conspirators respect him for his 'honour'. He slays Caesar boldly, without wavering, in the cause of honour. Antony sends a message, asking to interview the conspirators:

Brutus is noble, wise, valiant and honest,  
Caesar was mighty, bold, royal and loving:  
Say I love Brutus and I honour him;  
Say I fear'd Caesar, honour'd him and loved him.  
(III. i. 126)

Brutus promises him safety by his 'honour' (III. i. 141); then assures him he can give him ample 'reasons' for Caesar's death. He thinks ever in terms of cold abstract

processes of reason, and, unlike Antony and Cassius, ever fails in contact with the rich warm life of reality. Thus he ever misjudges men: he lets Antony speak at Caesar's funeral. He is half-hearted: neither a good conspirator like Cassius nor a good lover like Antony. Next Brutus gives his 'public reasons' (III. ii. 7) for Caesar's death in his speech to the citizens. Again, he emphasizes 'honour':

Romans, countrymen, and lovers! hear me for my cause,  
and be silent, that you may hear: believe me for mine honour,  
and have respect to mine honour, that you may believe:  
censure me in your wisdom, and awake your senses, that you  
may the better judge. If there be any in this assembly, any  
dear friend of Caesar's, to him I say, that Brutus' love to  
Caesar was no less than his. If then that friend demand why  
Brutus rose against Caesar, this is my answer:—Not that I  
loved Caesar less, but that I loved Rome more . . .

(III. ii. 13)

This speech exactly exposes the love-honour dualism in Brutus' experience. Both before and after Caesar's death, we find Brutus' 'honour' conflicting with his loves: and always this failure to unify his experiences results in disorder, failure. He trusts to his abstractions pitifully: here he expects the citizens to be convinced by cold reasoning. One breath of Antony's passion, one sight of Caesar's mutilated body, will dispel that effect. So Antony's speech drives Brutus and Cassius from Rome.

Brutus shows himself cold in his quarrel with Cassius. The rights and wrongs of the matter are hard to decide and not important. Both appear faulty: Brutus has 'condemned' a friend of Cassius on a paltry charge, Cassius has refused money to Brutus, or so it seems. Brutus, however, can scarcely with any justice both blame Cassius for accepting bribes and for refusing himself money. His want is due to his own refusal to raise money 'by vile means' (IV. iii. 71). Thus to desire a loan from Cassius is clearly to justify Cassius' use of bribery. However, the issue is vague. But a general truth emerges. Brutus is still hampering success by continued regard for his 'honour'. Cassius, less scrupu-

lous, shows, as always, more warmth of heart. Cassius is always in touch with realities—of love, of conspiracy, of war: Brutus is ever most at home with his ethical abstractions. He treasures to his heart the 'justice' of his cause:

Remember March, the Ides of March remember:  
Did not great Julius bleed for justice' sake?  
What villain touch'd his body, that did stab,  
And not for justice? What, shall one of us,  
That struck the foremost man of all this world  
But for supporting robbers, shall we now  
Contaminate our fingers with base bribes,  
And sell the mighty space of our large honours  
For so much trash as may be grasped thus?  
I had rather be a dog, and bay the moon,  
Than such a Roman.

(iv. iii. 18)

The quarrel is exquisitely human and pathetic. As their cause fails, these two 'noble' Romans—the word 'noble' is frequent in the play—begin to wrangle over money. Brutus starts by his noble apostrophe to 'justice': but soon we feel his primary anxiety is a very practical one—lack of gold:

*Brutus.* . . . I did send  
To you for gold to pay my legions,  
Which you denied me: was that done like Cassius?  
Should I have answer'd Caius Cassius so?  
When Marcus Brutus grows so covetous,  
To lock such rascal counters from his friends,  
Be ready, gods, with all your thunderbolts;  
Dash him to pieces!

*Cassius.* I denied you not.

*Brutus.* You did.

*Cassius.* I did not: he was but a fool

That brought my answer back . . . (iv. iii. 75)

We may observe, with reference to Brutus' self-idealisation here, that, if he did not deny Cassius gold, he certainly ignored his letters on behalf of Lucius Pella. This quarrel marks the failure of Brutus and Cassius. Their impending joint failure is forecast in this inner dissension. Also it suggests the failure of ideals unrelated to practical



expediency: Brutus' ship of 'honour' dashes on the hard rocks of finance. It is pathetic, human, and exactly true. At last their dissension is healed by Cassius' love. Brutus' coldness thaws. As with his wife earlier, a deeper loyalty replaces his frigid abstractions:

Do what you will, dishonour shall be humour. (iv. iii. 109)

Next Brutus again reverts to abstractions: this time his prided stoic philosophy:

*Cassius.* I did not think you could have been so angry.

*Brutus.* O Cassius, I am sick of many griefs.

*Cassius.* Of your philosophy you make no use,  
If you give place to accidental evils.

*Brutus.* No man bears sorrow better. Portia is dead.

(iv. iii. 143)

Cassius is to 'speak no more of her' (iv. iii. 158). The news is corroborated by Messala. Brutus hears it a second time; there is no possibility of mistake. Again, he receives it dispassionately, to Cassius' wonder:

I have as much of this in art as you,

But yet my nature could not bear it so. (iv. iii. 194)

'Art.' Brutus makes life a long process of 'art', almost 'fiction'. He aspires to impossibilities and unrealities, carries a great burden of 'honour' and 'nobility' through life: which honour is continually troubled by the deeps of emotion which he shares with Antony and Cassius. He is only outwardly cold. Throughout his story love is intermittent with the iron calls of honour. Caesar, Portia, Cassius (whose conspiracy he ruins, whose soldiership he hampers)—his love for all has been sacrificed to honour in one way or another. But that love itself need not be questioned. It is deep; its organ notes are pure:

*Brutus.* Noble, noble Cassius,

Good night, and good repose.

*Cassius.* O my dear brother!

This was an ill beginning of the night:

Never come such division 'tween our souls!

Let it not, Brutus.

*Brutus.* Everything is well.

*Cassius.* Good night, my lord.

*Brutus.* Good night, good brother.

(iv. iii. 232)

'Brother' is emphasized. Notice how Cassius is always ready to humble himself to Brutus—'my lord'. Their practical failure is here clearly heralded: but a victory has been realized in Brutus, a victory for love. Left alone, he asks Lucius to play to him. Lucius' care-free purity of youth always touches Brutus' heart to words which suggest here—both in Act II and Act IV—a more spontaneous love than any he shows to other people. He always speaks gently to him: 'Bear with me, good boy, I am much forgetful' (iv. iii. 255), and 'I trouble thee too much but thou art willing' (iv. iii. 259). Lucius is sleepy. He knows the dreamless sleep that holds no torment, unlike the phantasma of Brutus' divided soul. He has already 'slept':

*Brutus.* It was well done; and thou shalt sleep again;

I will not hold thee long: if I do live,

I will be good to thee.

(iv. iii. 263)

There is 'music and a song'. So music, with Brutus' love for his boy, are blended here: music and love, healing, unifying spells casting momentary peace on Brutus' divided soul. The boy sleeps:

If thou dost nod, thou break'st thy instrument;

I'll take it from thee; and, good boy, good night.

(iv. iii. 271)

That is one extreme: extreme of peace, love and music, realities Brutus has banished, repressed. He pays for his momentary heaven. Swiftly its opposing hell returns. The 'evil' in his soul accuses him:

*Brutus.* . . . Art thou any thing?

Art thou some god, some angel, or some devil,

That makest my blood cold and my hair to stare?

Speak to me what thou art.

*Ghost.* Thy evil spirit, Brutus.

(iv. iii. 278)

There is no prolonged peace for Brutus. His life, in the

play, has been 'like a phantasma or a hideous dream' (II. i. 65), due, like nightmare, to a divided consciousness; 'evil' none the less potent for its deriving its existence from the clash of two positive goods: 'honour' and 'love'.

Brutus is ever obsessed with his 'honour'. Octavius mocks Brutus and Cassius as 'traitors', saying he was not born to die on Brutus' sword. To which Brutus replies:

O, if thou wert the noblest of thy strain,  
Young man, thou couldst not die more honourable.  
(v. i. 59)

He often refers to himself in a strain which repels by its egoism:

. . . think not, thou noble Roman,  
That ever Brutus will go bound to Rome;  
He bears too great a mind. (v. i. 111)

Curiously, this contradicts his words just spoken that suicide is 'cowardly'. His life is one long contradiction, one long abstraction. This boast is of the same order as his boast in the quarrel scene:

There is no terror, Cassius, in your threats,  
For I am arm'd so strong in honesty  
That they pass by me as the idle wind,  
Which I respect not. (iv. iii. 66)

He is so enwrapped in a sense of his own honour that others can make no headway against his will. The conspirators always give way to him. Cassius cannot resist his self-haloed personality ever. He submits to Brutus' judgement as to coming down from the hills to meet Octavius and Antony: the event is disaster. Even in the fight 'Brutus gave the word too early' (v. iii. 5). Brutus is a continual hindrance, usually exactly because of his exaggerated sense of honour. Yet he rouses our admiration by his consistency, his steadiness of purpose in serving a figment of his own mind. Even when he finds Cassius dead, he shows little emotion. Yet we feel deep surges unspoken:

I shall find time, Cassius, I shall find time. (v. iii. 103)

Strangely, though through his life he has banished the softer joys of love, when at the end he knows his enterprise to be an utter failure, Caesar's spirit victorious, he joys in the thought of friendship:

The ghost of Caesar hath appeared to me  
Two several times by night; at Sardis once,  
And, this last night, here in Philippi fields:  
I know my hour is come. (v. v. 17)

Therefore—

Countrymen,  
My heart doth joy that yet in all my life  
I found no man but he was true to me.  
I shall have glory by this losing day  
More than Octavius and Mark Antony  
By this vile conquest shall attain unto.  
So fare you well at once; for Brutus' tongue  
Hath almost ended his life's history:  
Night hangs upon mine eyes; my bones would rest,  
That have but labour'd to attain this hour. (v. v. 33)

Into the darkness of death he takes the simple joy that his followers have been true to him. There is resignation here, a knowledge of failure, an acceptance of tragedy. The things he valued have played him false. He has 'dismembered' Caesar, but has not 'come by' his 'spirit', partly because he himself from the first made that unreal mental division of Caesar the man and Caesar the imperial force in Rome. So Caesar's disembodied 'spirit', his ghost, Brutus' own creation, pursues Brutus to his death. And the long torment of division in Brutus' soul is closed, the wounding dualism healed in death, an easy 'rest'; and in thoughts of his friends' faith. Love, at the last, quietly takes him, honour-wearied, by the hand, into the darkness. But even in his dying he is anxious for 'honour'. 'Thy life hath had some smatch of honour in it' he says to Strato (v. v. 46), when asking him to hold his sword.

Antony speaks a noble eulogy over his body. Octavius will have it 'order'd honourably' (v. v. 79). Honour always. But Antony is right in saying Brutus slew Caesar 'in a

general honest thought' (v. v. 71), though he may be wrong in attributing only 'envy' to the rest. Brutus is sincere throughout. He unwaveringly pursues an ethical ideal which appears somewhat bloodless in this play of imperial glory, pulsing love, envy, ambition. Though bloodless, it yet sheds blood. Brutus lets his abstraction loose in the world of reality: he will not render Caesar what is Caesar's and offer his ideal to God. Thus he is the only force properly 'ethical' in the play: the rest act by emotion. Yet this ethical cast of thought itself creates division and disorder in his mind, in his view of Caesar under the two aspects, man and ruler:

It must be by his death, and for my part  
I know no personal cause to spurn at him,  
But for the general. (II. i. 10)

He is himself confused in this speech—as we, too, are confused by the two Caesars, till Antony's strong love creates the Caesar we know. Like Caesar himself, he is anxious as to this tremendous power coming to the friend he loves. What change may it work? All the disorder-symbols of the play are to be related to Brutus' divided allegiances. The vision of naked spirit flaming over Rome is a projection of Brutus' own spirit-abstraction unharmonized with life. It cannot be too strongly emphasized that the conspiracy without Brutus might have been a life-force, a creating of order, not a destruction. So he ruins first Caesar, then the cause of his own party. Antony wins over the citizens by ringing the changes on his own slogan, 'honour'.

So are they all, all honourable men. (III. ii. 89)

Love's mockery of 'honour'. Over and over again he drives it in: 'Brutus is an honourable man' (III. ii. 87 and 99), 'Sure, he is an honourable man' (III. ii. 104)—and again at lines 129, 132, 216, 218. Again,

I fear I wrong the honourable men  
Whose daggers have stabbed Caesar; I do fear it. (III. ii. 156)

Brutus' honour pains and slays Portia, drives Cassius in

their quarrel almost to madness, while Brutus remains ice-cold, armed appallingly in 'honesty'. He shows little emotion at his dear ones' death. You can do nothing with him. He is so impossibly noble: and when we forget his nobility he becomes just 'impossible'. Thus when he would for once solace himself for a while with Lucius—his truest love—and Lucius' music, his 'evil spirit' denies his right to such relief. This incident corresponds exactly to the irruption of Banquo's ghost into Macbeth's feast. Macbeth especially desecrates hospitality, Brutus love. Neither may enjoy what they destroy. Brutus has put love from him. He rides roughshod over domestic happiness, like Macbeth. His acts disturb Portia, dislocate meals and sleep. So, too, Caesar and Calpurnia are roused from bed, and Caesar's hospitality desecrated. Cassius, on the contrary, invites people to dinner. The contrast is important. Such pursuit of an ethical ideal in and for itself, unrelated to the time and people around, is seen at the last to be perilous. It is a selfishness. His ethic is no ethic, rather a projection of himself. A phantasma of his own mind. Like Macbeth he projects his mental pain on his country. He alone bears the responsibility of Caesar's death, since he alone among the conspirators sees—and so creates—its wrongfulness; he alone bears the burden of the conspiracy's failure. He only has a guilty conscience—anguished by an 'evil spirit'. But Cassius, at the last, is 'fresh of spirit' (v. i. 91). And yet, Brutus has glory by his losing day. He suffers, not because he is less than those around him but because he is, in a sense, far greater. He is the noblest Roman of them all. He suffers, and makes others suffer, for his virtue: but such virtue is not enough. Virtue, to Brutus, is a quality to be rigidly distinguished from love. Love, in fact, ever conflicts with it. He denies the greatest force in life and the only hope in death. He thus fails in life and dies sadly, pathetically searching at the end for some one 'honourable' enough to slay him. He has starved his love on earth: he thinks at the last of his faithful friends, would take what crumbs he can to solace him in the darkness.

Cassius is strongly contrasted with Brutus. He is described by Caesar:

He reads much;  
 He is a great observer and he looks  
 Quite through the deeds of men; he loves no plays,  
 As thou dost, Antony; he hears no music;  
 Seldom he smiles, and smiles in such a sort  
 As if he mock'd himself and scorn'd his spirit  
 That could be moved to smile at any thing.  
 Such men as he be never at heart's ease  
 Whiles they behold a greater than themselves,  
 And therefore are they very dangerous. (I. ii. 201)

The description is not one to be ashamed of. Cassius has profound understanding, a rich personality. He is very sincere. He claims, rightly, to have nothing in him of the flatterer or scandalmonger: he is no 'common laughers' like Lucio (I. ii. 72-8). His seriousness makes him sombre, gloomy, ashamed of all trivialities. Smiles, plays, music—all are barred. Instead, we have knowledge of men, books, restlessness of temperament. He has something of the morbidity of the artistic temperament. He is a perfect artist in conspiracy. Caesar is afraid of Cassius, afraid of his insight, his depth of soul: afraid, primarily, of something he cannot understand. In point of profundity and earnestness Cassius is similar to the Duke in *Measure for Measure*. The Duke had 'ancient skill' in reading other's characters (IV. ii. 164). He contended especially 'to know himself' (III. ii. 247). As for pleasures, he was

Rather rejoicing to see another merry, than merry at any thing  
 which professed to make him rejoice: a gentleman of all  
 temperance. (*Measure for Measure*, III. ii. 250)

The Duke, too, was critical of music:

. . . music oft hath such a charm  
 To make bad good, and good provoke to harm.  
 (*Measure for Measure*, IV. i. 14)

His utter sincerity—the sincerity which is at the heart of his ethic—is apparent in his distrust of display:

I love the people,  
 But do not like to stage me to their eyes:  
 Though it do well, I do not relish well  
 Their loud applause and Aves vehement;  
 Nor do I think the man of safe discretion  
 That does affect it. (*Measure for Measure*, I. i. 68)

So, too, Cassius seems to suffer from a certain shy inwardness, hating shows and ceremonies. Cassius does not 'profess himself in banqueting to all the rout' (I. ii. 77); but he invites Casca to a private supper, as I observe above. And it is exactly this show and ceremony and music which surrounds Caesar on his first entry: Cassius, like the Duke of Vienna, instinctively distrusts it. Both are to be contrasted with Timon or Antony (in this play or *Antony and Cleopatra*)—those more free-hearted heroes who love feasting, music, display. These are both, in vastly different ways, lovers, profound lovers, although the Duke may appear, once, to deny love's power to grip his heart: in them love is compressed, controlled, its essence not readily apparent. Love is powerful in Cassius, but does not come easily. He is too sincere to be happy. This comparison is valuable since, though Cassius is in other respects vastly different from the Duke, nevertheless, in point of this oneness yet richness of personality, the likeness is striking. For Cassius has, like the Duke a 'complete bosom' (*Measure for Measure*, I. iii. 3). He is always, as it were, safe, invulnerable to chance, his own soul is a fortress:

I know where I will wear this dagger then;  
 Cassius from bondage will deliver Cassius:  
 Therein, ye gods, you make the weak most strong;  
 Therein, ye gods, you tyrants do defeat:  
 Nor stony tower, nor walls of beaten brass,  
 Nor airless dungeon, nor strong links of iron,  
 Can be retentive to the strength of spirit. (I. iii. 89)

This assurance is born of a unity of soul. He is not divided, like Brutus. It will at once be clear how Brutus stands to Cassius much as Angelo to the Duke of Vienna. Angelo, like Brutus, fails by his worship of abstract virtue: the



analogy there is immediately evident, and closer than the other. Now, however much we may dislike Cassius' acts—some have done so—it is clear that he possesses singleness of purpose, and a sense of integrity which renders him fearless:

*Casca.* . . . Cassius, what night is this!

*Cassius.* A very pleasing night to honest men.

*Casca.* Who ever knew the heavens menace so?

*Cassius.* Those that have known the earth so full of faults.

(I. iii. 42)

He has taken deliberate pleasure in walking the streets 'unbraced', baring his 'bosom to the thunderstone':

And when the cross blue lightning seem'd to open

The breast of heaven, I did present myself

Even in the aim and very flash of it. (I. iii. 50)

So strongly is his integrity emphasized. Enduring no disorder in himself, he fears no outer disorder; knowing himself perfectly, he has no fears of the mysterious and unknown. He finds a place for these disorders. To him they reflect the terrors of Caesar's tyranny, a heaven-sent warning:

. . . why, you shall find

That heaven hath infused them with these spirits,

To make them instruments of fear and warning

Unto some monstrous state. (I. iii. 68)

Caesar is fearful as these portents, himself like 'this dreadful night':

A man no mightier than thyself or me

In personal action, yet prodigious grown

And fearful, as these strange eruptions are. (I. iii. 76)

Cassius despises Caesar as a 'person'. Nor can he see him, as Brutus can, as a national hero. The adulation of Rome is absurd. He does not even blame Caesar at all. The fault is his countrymen's:

And why should Caesar be a tyrant then?

Poor man! I know he would not be a wolf,

But that he sees the Romans are but sheep:

He were no lion, were not Romans hinds. (I. iii. 103)

Rome is 'rubbish' and 'offal' whose blaze illuminates 'so vile a thing as Caesar' (I. iii. 109). Cassius has nothing but contempt for Caesar, his glory is merely a madness in his admirers. He does not, like Brutus, see two Caesars: he sees only one—a frail, weak, contemptible man; and, next, the hero-worship of Rome. He, like Antony, knows his own mind. After the murder, we tend to see Caesar through Antony's eyes, but at the start of the play we often see him as Cassius sees him. In the middle action we see him with Brutus' indecisive vision. Marullus and Flavius set the note of hostility at the start. Throughout the first act we hear mainly Cassius' opinion, expressed at length to Brutus and Casca. Cassius' arguments to Brutus are clear and exact. Caesar is a weak man physically, a bad swimmer, subject to fever. Cassius is himself his equal, even his superior, if the swimming contest be admitted, and, after all, Caesar suggested it as a test of 'daring'.

Ye gods, it doth amaze me  
A man of such a feeble temper should  
So get the start of the majestic world  
And bear the palm alone. (I. ii. 128)

This frail man 'is now become a God' (I. ii. 116). Cassius must bow to him. Cassius' motive is clearly a sort of envy: but it is a fully conscious envy, which stands the test of his own reasoning. The Roman republican ideal is strong in him: he emphasizes it often. He will strike for Rome, for reason, for common sense. He sees Caesar's sudden access of power as a dangerous, fantastic, ludicrous thing: nor do Caesar's own acts and words—his fainting fits, his indecision, his pitiful attempts to be 'Caesar'—fail to bear out his view. Cassius is thus partially justified at the start. But there are other elements to be observed in him.

It is to be noted that he has little sense of abstract honour. To him the end justifies any means. He resembles Scott's 'Burley' in *Old Mortality*. The conspiracy is necessary. He wants Brutus. Therefore he will stoop to deception in the matter of the letters quite readily to

win him. Yet he can respect Brutus' 'nobility', without understanding it:

Well, Brutus, thou art noble; yet, I see,  
 Thy honourable metal may be wrought  
 From that it is disposed: therefore it is meet  
 That noble minds keep ever with their likes;  
 For who so firm that cannot be seduced?  
 Caesar doth bear me hard; but he loves Brutus:  
 If I were Brutus now and he were Cassius,  
 He should not humour me. (1. ii. 312)

This is a crucial and curious speech. I will attempt a coherent paraphrase. Cassius honours Brutus for his high ideals. Yet he sees that Brutus' 'honour' sense can readily be 'wrought' from honourable loyalty to honourable conspiracy. It is a risky thing to be governed by. He is baffled, as we are, and Brutus is, at the complex conflict in Brutus' mind. Cassius, single in purpose, finds Brutus' unsteadiness strange. Such noble men should therefore keep, he says, not with other noble minds, but rather with men of like opinions to their own. A man who worships abstract honour can always and easily be reasoned into pursuing almost any course in the name of that honour. To Cassius such 'honour' is therefore a deceit and such cold reasoning a dangerous thing: albeit it serves his purpose here. He himself acts by instinct: instinctive envy, a dark hatred of Caesar's absurd rise to power. He observes, moreover, that Caesar dislikes him, but loves Brutus. This is also at the root of his 'envy'. If Caesar loved him, he says, no amount of reasoning would persuade him to the conspiracy. He himself could never betray love. Cassius always follows personal emotions. This argument silhouettes Cassius' personality vividly. Cassius gives one the impression of loneliness, gloom, disillusion: he has known the world 'full of faults' (1. iii. 45). He is dark with thwarted ambition and envy. But a certain golden star burns in his heart: a great longing for love. At the start he is anxious for Brutus' love:

Brutus, I do observe you now of late:  
 I have not from your eyes that gentleness  
 And show of love as I was wont to have:  
 You bear too stubborn and too strange a hand  
 Over your friend that loves you. (I. ii. 32)

Throughout the play Cassius' love of Brutus is emphasized. We find many emotions in him: envy, ardour, love. He possesses a certain spiritual loneliness and a sense of ultimate security, he is the captain of his soul. But he is not happy: rather given to gloom and foreboding. He is romantic, compact of poetry. Intellect is subsidiary with him, and he is more at home with realities than abstractions. He does not understand Brutus' ethical finesse. Yet respect for his friend causes him to give way to Brutus time after time, thereby ruining his own conspiracy. Frustrated through life, he appears ever to expect the worst. He fears their 'purpose is discovered' (III. i. 17):

Brutus, what shall be done? If this be known,  
 Cassius or Caesar never shall turn back,  
 For I will slay myself. (III. i. 20)

And his foreboding is often justified. Brutus thinks they will have Antony 'well to friend', and he answers:

I wish we may: but yet have I a mind  
 That fears him much; and my misgiving still  
 Falls shrewdly to the purpose. (III. i. 144)

After Caesar's death he is maddened by Brutus' obsession with 'honour'. His complaint is typical. He interceded for a friend, Lucius Pella, whom Brutus subsequently punished for accepting bribes. Cassius ever champions personal emotions, personal fears and forebodings, antipathies and envies, personal love. Brutus ever upholds an intellectual ideal of 'honour'. They meet, one passionate and ardent, the other aloof, scornful, self-righteous:

*Cassius.* Most noble brother, you have done me wrong.

*Brutus.* Judge me, you gods! wrong I mine enemies?

And, if not so, how should I wrong a brother?

*Cassius.* Brutus, this sober form of yours hides wrongs;

And when you do them— (IV. ii. 37)

Throughout the quarrel Cassius is passionate in anger, grief, or love. Brutus is cold, aureoled in self-righteousness, unreachable, remote: but beneath emotion surges, too, in him. Cassius is the first to give way, to admit fault. Typically, he fights throughout, not, like Brutus, with reason, but with emotion. He is in this the more feminine of the two. First, anger; next, grief:

Brutus hath rived my heart;  
A friend should bear his friend's infirmities,  
But Brutus makes mine greater than they are.

(iv. iii. 85)

Brutus loves him not: a 'friendly eye' would not see such faults. Brutus' ethical scorn still lacerates him unmercifully. At last, he exposes the riches of his thwarted longing, passion-soul:

Come, Antony, and young Octavius, come,  
Revenge yourselves alone on Cassius,  
For Cassius is aweary of the world;  
Hated by one he loves; braved by his brother;  
Check'd like a bondman; all his faults observed,  
Set in a note-book, learn'd and conn'd by rote,  
To cast into my teeth. O, I could weep  
My spirit from mine eyes! There is my dagger,  
And here my naked breast; within, a heart  
Dearer than Plutus' mine, richer than gold:  
If that thou be'st a Roman, take it forth;  
I, that denied thee gold, will give my heart:  
Strike, as thou didst at Caesar; for, I know,  
When thou didst hate him worst, thou lovedst him better  
Than ever thou lovedst Cassius.

(iv. iii. 93)

Here Cassius challenges the rich worth of his emotional nature against the other integrity of Brutus. But what is there in Brutus that dare so boast its spiritual 'gold'? And Cassius wins, by power of love. They celebrate their new strength with a bowl of wine. His 'heart' is thirsty, he 'cannot drink too much of Brutus' love' (iv. iii. 162). Cassius is wrung with sorrow at Portia's death, and shows more grief than Brutus. And he gives way to Brutus on

points of strategy. He is, indeed, the more experienced soldier:

I am a soldier, I,  
Older in practice, abler than yourself  
To make conditions. (iv. iii. 30)

Yet, as always, he gives way to Brutus. At this point he is, indeed, far more concerned with his and Brutus' love than any military expedients:

O my dear brother!  
This was an ill beginning of the night:  
Never come such division 'tween our souls!  
Let it not, Brutus. (iv. iii. 233)

Cassius' love thus saves the conspiracy from the final disgrace of 'division', enables it to meet its end intact.

But he himself appears to have passed beyond such interests. Although his temper flares for an instant at Antony's taunts, Antony who calls him a 'flatterer', the very thing he is not and would never be—'Now, Brutus, thank yourself . . .' (v. i. 45)—he appears to have found a new strength. Something in him is unloosed, freed, in the quarrel-scene: he has a strength and purpose independent of success. This 'something' is a kind of love. He still has forebodings. He tells Messala how 'ravens, crows, and kites' form a 'canopy most fatal' (v. i. 85-8) over their army. Like the others, Calpurnia, Caesar, Brutus, Cinna, he has begun to 'credit things that do presage' (v. i. 79). Yet he has always possessed a retreat, a lonely eyry of the spirit, which renders him fearless. Now, especially, he appears new in strength:

I but believe it partly;  
For I am fresh of spirit and resolved  
To meet all perils very constantly. (v. i. 90)

A visionary light settles on him, singles him now for the first time as protagonist. As ever, it is he who expects the worst, asks Brutus what he will do if the battle be lost:

Let's reason with the worst that may befall. (v. i. 97)

He parts from Brutus. There is no more noble parting in

90 THE EROTICISM OF JULIUS CAESAR  
Shakespeare. Next we see him in the flood of battle.  
Failure is imminent, his men fly.

*Pindarus.* Fly further off, my lord, fly further off;

Mark Antony is in your tents, my lord:

Fly, therefore, noble Cassius, fly far off.

*Cassius.* This hill is far enough. Look, look, Titinius;

Are those my tents where I perceive the fire?

*Titinius.* They are, my lord.

*Cassius.* Titinius, if thou lovest me,

Mount thou my horse, and hide thy spurs in him,

Till he have brought thee up to yonder troops,

And here again; that I may rest assured

Whether yond troops are friend or enemy. (v. iii. 9)

There is now a light-foot strength of spirit in Cassius: something fiery-strong, intangible, intractable to definition. He is yet strangely 'fresh of spirit' in disaster, in foreboding:

Go, Pindarus, get higher on that hill;

My sight was ever thick; regard Titinius,

And tell me what thou notest about the field.

(v. iii. 20)

Pindarus leaves him:

This day I breathed first: time is come round,

And where I did begin, there shall I end;

My life is run his compass. (v. iii. 23)

Cleopatra-like, he thus celebrates his birthday under the shadow of impending tragedy. And yet, this birth-remembrance yet lights this death with a sudden expectancy, a birth—a death and birth:

Come down, behold no more.

O, coward that I am, to live so long,

To see my best friend ta'en before my face!

(v. iii. 33)

A breathless expectancy indeed charges this scene. It is a positive, purposeful adventure, a stepping free, a death, like Cleopatra's, into love. Cassius the envious, the passionate, the lover, is now afloat on a love—Brutus

before, now Titinius. Names are but symbols through which the spirit steps naked into the air and fire of love. Cassius gives Pindarus his last charge, the air aquiver with immortality. Like Antony, he bids his bondman remember the condition by which the saving of his 'life' has bound him to obedience:

Come now, keep thine oath;  
Now be a freeman . . . (v. iii. 40)

'Life', 'freeman': what are these associations? In my reading of this scene I may be thought to tread a dangerous precipice. For only by irrationalities are my statements justified. But the associations here are powerful: the 'fire' perceived by Cassius, the love of Titinius—'if thou lovedst me'—'birth', 'shouts' of 'joy' (v. iii. 32), 'my best friend', 'saving of thy life', 'freeman': all this, together with the event which proves indeed that victory has been mistaken for failure, all stresses, not death, but life-in-death. The sight of mortality is 'ever thick'. The associations here contradict the logic: it is often the way of poetry. Cassius all but accomplishes the fiery splendour and conscious purpose of Cleopatra's death-in-love. His death is a thing of ecstasy and liberation. Pindarus will fly far 'where never Roman shall take note of him' (v. iii. 50). Safe and far, Pindarus or Cassius? Far from Rome. It is well that the purest essence of this play's poetry be spilled over his body:

No, this was he, Messala,  
But Cassius is no more. O setting sun,  
As in thy red rays thou dost sink to-night,  
So in his red blood Cassius' day is set;  
The sun of Rome is set. (v. iii. 59)

As the blood of the lover's heart streams out, the blood of republican Rome itself is spilt on the Parthian sands: and the crimson of the great sun drops level to honour with horizontal streams of fire the spirit of man victorious. This is the Shakespearian sanction of love which has the



universe at its bidding. Cassius is now crowned with a wreath of victory: our final, most vivid, association:

*Titinius.* Why didst thou send me forth, brave Cassius?  
 Did I not meet thy friends? And did not they  
 Put on my brows this wreath of victory,  
 And bid me give it thee? Didst thou not hear their shouts?  
 Alas, thou hast misconstrued every thing!  
 But, hold thee, take this garland on thy brow;  
 Thy Brutus bid me give it thee, and I  
 Will do his bidding. Brutus, come apace,  
 And see how I regarded Caius Cassius.  
 By your leave, gods:—this is a Roman's part:  
 Come, Cassius' sword, and find Titinius' heart.

(v. iii. 80)

'Heart' always in this play of fire and love. So Titinius crowns Cassius. 'Thy Brutus . . .'

Shall it not grieve thee dearer than thy death  
 To see thy Antony . . .

(III. i. 197)

It is all one. This universe of kingly ambition, divided allegiances, envy, hostility, friendship—all is dominated and finally fused by love, the love and intimacy that beats here in imagery, incident, emotion, life, and death itself. So Titinius crowns Cassius, the lover, in death:

Brave Titinius!

Look, whether he have not crown'd dead Cassius!

(v. iii. 96)

Like Charmian over Cleopatra, he arranges the lover's crown, then hastens to follow his master. I have compared Cassius with the Duke in *Measure for Measure*; and now I relate his death to that of Cleopatra, to whom he is close in point of a certain romantic strength which solicits our respect apparently quite independently of any ethical judgement. What quality can we say binds these three? The Duke is the prince of ethical moralizers; Cleopatra, the Queen of Courtezans. Yet all three possess a certain unique richness of soul and range of feeling: and in this they conquer.

The imperial theme of mighty Caesar is thus the hub on which revolves a theme of wider scope, imperially crowned with fire of love's radiance. Human activity in all its ardour and positive splendour is set within an ever-present atmosphere of love. Man is vivid—in act and renown—all are 'noble'; his spirit-fire burns through physical weakness; the gashed body releases streams of red life. The slaying of Caesar is a grand, an historic act:

How many ages hence  
Shall this our lofty scene be acted over  
In states unborn and accents yet unknown!  
(III. i. 111)

In assassination the conspirators are yet Caesar's 'friends' (III. i. 104). The power of Caesar has come on him unprepared, he is himself embarrassed, fearful of the mighty sway of the world-empire to be trusted to his weakness. The fate of the western world trembles in the balance as he puts the crown aside, 'loath to lay his fingers off it' (I. ii. 243). He knows himself, as Cassius knows him, weak—as who would not be weak?—for such an Atlas burden; and he hates Cassius for knowing it. Till he is murdered, Cassius is right. But Brutus has offered us a dualized vision: Caesar, a man lovable, a friend—and Caesar potential, under stress of power become a danger, an enemy of Rome (II. i. 10–34). He, like Caesar himself, is uneasy. The division in his soul is, like our vision of the middle scenes, a rough tearing of 'body' from 'spirit', which dualism is at the root also of Caesar's fears—Caesar who knows himself a puny man, but must live up to a lion strength of spirit equal to Danger itself. Cassius, too, sees on the one side Caesar, the weakling, and, on the other, the adulation of Rome fit only for a god. All our early fears, doubts, insecurities of vision are related to this body-spirit dualism: hence our symbols of naked fire, spirit raging unfitted to the finite, and impossible events on earth, bodies uninfused with soul. Caesar dead, Antony's love at once—as never before—shows us Caesar

as he was. Hitherto we saw him in terms of fear, in terms of what he might be; and the poet well stresses his weakness, which is, however, only weakness in comparison with the superhuman glory and power about to light upon his brows. Seeing him in terms of fear, we saw him unreal; unreal with the deathly unreality of time-thinking we meet in *Macbeth*. In Antony's vision the dualism is a unity. The Caesar of history swims into our ken in Antony's first words after the assassination. Love heals the severance of 'body' from 'spirit'. Perhaps Cassius was wrong. He was blind to Caesar's greatness. To see ahead and fear is evil and unreal: reality is now, and love. Cassius who ever looks ahead, foreboding ill, yet treasures also a spiritual fortress which has no fear, and finally falls back only on this soul-treasure in his breast. Caesar's spirit has proved his course of action wrong (v. iii. 45); but not his heart 'richer than gold'. As failure nears, his love is brighter, he steps free. Antony's victory is the conquest of love, love which saw only in Caesar a true friend and a great man, that made no 'god' comparisons nor foolishly stressed his physique, and, seeing the real Caesar, was content to trust him with Rome's fate. And Cassius' death, too, is a conquest of love. Time and again he sacrifices his conspiracy for Brutus. Brutus ruins an otherwise seaworthy plot. But Cassius drinks his fill of Brutus' love at the last, and dies 'fresh of spirit' in the cause of friendship. Brutus refuses love for honour. In incident after incident he brushes love aside. He alone is throughout wholly responsible for the dualism which wrenches 'spirit' from 'body', in Rome or in his own mind. True, I have said that Cassius' view of the Caesar problem is proved false by Antony. As the play stands, it is. But without Brutus and his 'honour' there would have been no Antony to redirect our vision. Then there would have been a straightforward assassination needing no disorder symbolism. During his life, Caesar fits Cassius' view well enough. There is nothing in him to show Cassius' fears unfounded, except in the sense, noted above, in which all

'fear' is evil. Again we see the exactitude of the poet's intuition in the variations he plays on the Caesar-idea. We realize how truly the poet has refused any one explicit statement<sup>1</sup> of the meaning of his symbolism:

But men may construe things after their fashion,  
Clean from the purpose of the things themselves.

(I. iii. 34)

These portents are different things to different people, and their meaning varies according to the event. But the Brutus-wavering, the Brutus-division is, in a final judgement, the only exact 'cause' of what disorder and evil there is in the play. Against him are set two lovers: the lover of the republican ideal, Cassius; the lover of Caesar, Antony. Both are positive forces. Brutus is negative, because his fine intellect sees equally with the vision of the other two.

But all these complexities are but threads woven on a cloth whose delicate texture is compact of love. All wounds are healed. Brutus and Cassius part nobly, lovers at the last. Aptly, our final words are 'this happy day' (v. v. 81). The baffling, maddening, phantasma of the two Caesars is over, and Caesar's 'spirit' is at rest. It no longer exists as a bodiless, homeless abstraction: perhaps it never did.

<sup>1</sup> In *Macbeth*, where the murder is so extreme an evil, its essential unnaturalness is emphasized for us. The meaning of the symbolisms is explicitly stated. See the choric dialogue in *Macbeth*, II. iv.